CASTLE OF WOLFENBACH;

A GERMAN STORY.

John J Gooch.
1793
Bonaire

CASTLE OF WOLFENBACH;

A

GERMAN STORY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY MRS. PARSONS,

AUTHOR OF

ERRORS OF EDUCATION, MISS MEREDITH, WOMAN AS SHE SHOULD BE, AND INTRIGUES OF A MORNING.

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CASTLE OF WOLFENBACH,

A GERMAN STORY.

THE ladies propoſed an airing, to divert the Counteſs from dwelling on paſt events, and Matilda from apprehenſions of future ones. The carriage was ordered, and they drove as far as Hampſtead. The evening was uncommonly beautiful, and when they returned, the moon, which was in its meridian, ſhone with all its ſplendour. Juſt as the carriage ſtopped in Harley-ſtreet, Matilda, who ſat next the door, ſaw two gentlemen paſs ſlowly and look into the coach; ſhe plainly perceived one of them was Mr. Weimar: ſhe met his eyes, and he turned his haſtily from

her; ſhe gave a faint ſhriek, and hid her head behind Mrs. Courtney. Her friends were alarmed, but haſtened her into the houſe; ſhe ran into the dining-parlour, and, in inconceivable terror, cried out, "He is come—he is come!" "Who, who?" (exclaimed the Counteſs.) "Mr. Weimar, (anſwered ſhe;) did you not ſee him?" "No, (replied the Marchioneſs) and I hope your fears deceived you." "Too ſure they did not (ſaid Matilda) and I am convinced alſo that he knew me." "Fear nothing, (ſaid Mrs. Courtney;) you are in the power of your friends; he muſt prove his right to you before he can take you from us: here are no lettres de-cachet, the laws will protect you from injury; compoſe yourſelf, therefore, my dear girl—in England no violence can be offered to you in any ſhape."

This kind and ſeaſonable aſſurance calmed the terrors of the trembling Matilda; but when ſhe retired to reſt, and reflected on her cruel

cruel deſtiny, ſhe ſhed floods of tears, and paſſed a ſleepleſs night.

The following day was appointed for their return to Mrs. Courtney's villa, to ſpend a week or two, previous to the preparations for the birth-day, after which the whole party, with Lord Delby, propoſed going to Scarborough.

The Counteſs and Matilda bore evident marks in their features and pale looks, of the uneaſy ſtate of their minds; their amiable friends ſought to raiſe their ſpirits, and they felt too much gratitude to their kindneſs not to make the effort, though their ſmiles were clouded with ſorrow.

They had a pleaſant excurſion to Mrs. Courtney's houſe, and its delightful ſituation, with the cheerful hoſpitality of its charming owner, could not fail of making thoſe happy who had the honor of her friendſhip.

The Counteſs, who was known in public only as Madame Le Roche, and by which name her friends always called her in company, found in the ſympathy of Matilda more conſolation than the converſation of ſtrangers or any amuſements could afford her; they generally contrived to ſteal from company and ramble in the gardens, relating paſt ſorrows, and mutually endeavoring to inſpire each other with hopes of happier days, though deſpairing of any to themſelves.

A few days after they had been in the country, the Marquis received another packet from the Count De Bouville, encloſing a letter from Madame de Clermont, to Matilda. They learnt, with much ſorrow, that the Counteſs died three days after the Count's firſt letter; that their affliction had been very great, and preyed much on the ſpirits of her affectionate daughter, in conſequence of which ſhe had been adviſed to viſit Aix, and from thence to the Spa; their departure was fixed for the end of that week—Madame De Nancy and

and her amiable ſiſter De Bancre were going with them. Madame De Clermont requeſted the correſpondence of Matilda, and charged her to take great care of her brother. This charge Matilda did not comprehend, until the Marquis congratulated the party on the agreeable addition they might daily expect from the company of the Count De Bouville, who had written to him, that his ſiſter having a party of her own going to Aix, he had no inclination to viſit that place, and therefore ſhould gratify his wiſhes, by returning to England for a few months, and hoped to enjoy additional ſatisfaction by the pleaſures of their ſociety.

Every one appeared gratified by this information, except Matilda. She felt her heart flutter at his name; ſhe was convinced he was more intereſting to her than any other man, and that in her circumſtances ſhe ought not to indulge a preference which never could be returned. Ah! thought ſhe, where is the ſorrows that can equal mine? Scarce a

wretch that breaths but has ſome connexion, ſome relation to own them and ſympathiſe in their troubles, I alone am deſtitute of family, or fortune; I can carry only diſgrace to the arms of a huſband, and am therefore an outcaſt—a being without any natural ties, and muſt deſpair of procuring any other protection but what charity and benevolence affords me! She felt the full force of theſe melancholy reflections, and it threw ſuch a ſad impreſſion on her features that every one was touched with compaſſion, though they knew not the cauſe, and ſought by kindneſs and attention to render her more cheerful.

Within three days after this letter, which had occaſioned ſo much pleaſure and pain to different parties, the Marquis, by a note, was informed of the Count's arrival in London. Mrs. Courtney entreated the honor of his company, and Lord Delby offered to accompany the Marquis and eſcort him to their friends. This offer was too obliging to be de-

declined; they ſet off that evening, and the following morning returned with the Count.

Matilda ſpent the intermediate time in laying down rules for her behaviour. She ſtill ſuffered under the apprehenſions that Mr. Weimar had purſued, and would occaſion more trouble to her; ſhe therefore reſolved to avail herſelf of that fear, keep as much in her apartment as poſſible, and avoid mixing in all the little pleaſurable parties where the Count might make one.

The company received the Count with the politeſt attention. His amiable perſon, his poliſhed manners, and enchanting vivacity, could not fail of engaging the eſteem of every one who had taſte and diſcernment. After he had been introduced to the lady of the manſion, to the Marchioneſs, and to Madame Le Roche, whom he knew not, he advanced to Matilda; ſhe trembled; he took her hand, and bowing on it, "I am charged, (ſaid he) with a thouſand expreſſions of kindneſs and

friendſhip from my ſiſter and Mademoiſelle De Bancre, to the charming Miſs Matilda; but you muſt take them upon truſt now, and permit me to expreſs my own happineſs in ſeeing my lovely friend well, and ſituated in the midſt of a ſociety ſo delightful as this." She attempted to ſpeak, her voice, her powers failed her; "Your Lordſhip does me honor," was all ſhe could utter. The converſation become general and ſprightly, but ſhe had no ſhare in it; the day appeared uncommonly long, and ſhe rejoiced when night came, that ſhe could eſcape to her apartment and enjoy her own reflections.

The Count, who had obſerved her emotions, her ſilence and melancholy air, felt himſelf much concerned for the unfortunate girl; he thought her more lovely, more intereſting than ever: the ſoft melancholy which pervaded her fine features could not fail of touching a ſuſceptible heart; and the Count ſoon found the tender intereſt he had formerly taken in Matilda's misfortunes, re-

vive

vive with more ſolicitude than ever. He ſeized an opportunity the following morning, to enquire ſome particulars reſpecting the cauſe of her diſtreſs. The Marquis told him of her alarm on ſeeing a gentleman ſhe believed to be, and poſſibly, ſaid he, might be, Mr. Weimar. " I am really (added he) unhappy about this charming young women; we all love her exceedingly; beauty is her leaſt merit; ſhe has every amiable quality, joined to an excellent underſtanding, that can adorn a human being; I could not love my own child better; but ſhe has too much ſenſibility to be happy—ſhe feels her dependent and unprotected ſtate too keenly,—it preys upon her mind and injures her health. Conſulting with the Marchioneſs on this ſubject laſt night, I intend this day to write, and order a deed to be drawn, agreeable to our deſign of making her independent, at the ſame time, I wiſh not to burthen her feelings with too high a ſenſe of obligation, by ſettling any very large ſum on her: four hundred a year, Engliſh money, paid her quarterly, will enable her to

live genteelly, ſhould ſhe ever wiſh to ſeperate from us, and will be a handſome proviſion for pocket expences, if ſhe does us the favor of continuing under our protection."

"Will you permit me, (ſaid the Count, eagerly) to add another two hundred to her income?" "Indeed I will not, (replied the Marquis;) I think myſelf as much the guardian of Matilda's honor and delicacy as of her perſon: no young man ſhall boaſt any claims upon her, nor ſhall ſhe be humbled by receiving favors, which, if known, might ſubject her to cenſure—ſay no more, my dear Count, (added he, obſerving he was about to reply;) the Marchioneſs will not have her protegée under any obligations but to herſelf." "Shall I be ſincere with you, Marquis?" (demanded the Count.) "Doubtleſs, my Lord, you may, and aſſure yourſelf of my ſecreſy, if neceſſary." "Well then, (reſumed the Count) I confeſs to you, that with the Marchioneſs's protegée, as you call her, I ſhould be the happieſt of men: I feel, and acknow-

knowledge, that ſhe has more than beauty—ſhe has a ſoul; ſhe has thoſe virtues, thoſe amiable qualities, which muſt render any man happy: but, my dear Marquis, her birth—the ſcandalous ſtories promulgated of her in Paris: ah! what can do away theſe objections which riſe hourly before me, and bar me from happineſs and Matilda?" "Since you do me the honor of your confidence, my Lord, 'tis my duty to be candid and explicit. That I entertain the higheſt opinion of Matilda, is moſt certain—that I think whoever the man is, who is honored with her hand, will be a happy one, I alſo acknowledge; but, my Lord, family and ſociety have great claims upon us; we ought not to injure the one, nor diſregard the other. Could you bear to ſee your wife treated with contempt, as one whom nobody knew, as one who had no claims to diſtinction, but what your very great friends might allow her? Could you ſupport the idea, that ſhe whoſe genuine merit might entitle her to the firſt ſociety, ſhould be refuſed admittance among ſuch, as in real worth ſhe

very far ſurpaſſed? No; I know you would feel ſuch a degradation moſt painfully; and, though young men, in the moment of paſſion, think they could ſacrifice every thing to the object of it; yet, believe me, paſſion is but ſhort-lived, and though your wife may yet retain your love and eſteem, you will regret the loſs of ſociety—you will feel the inſults offered to your wife, and you will both be unhappy."

"Ah! my dear Marquis, (cried the Count) ſay no more. How happy are Engliſhmen! free from all thoſe falſe prejudices, they can confer honor on whom they pleaſe, and the want of noble birth is no degradation where merit and character deſerve eſteem; but we are the victims to falſe notions, and from thence originates all that levity and vice for which we are cenſured by other nations." He walked away with a melancholy air: the Marquis felt for him, but national honor was in his opinion of more conſequence than the grati-

gratification of a private individual, how great ſoever the merit of the object.

The Count walked into the garden, his arms folded, his mind diſtreſt, unknowing what he ſhould, what he ought to do. Turning into a ſmall alcove, he beheld Matilda, her head reclining on one hand, whilſt with the other ſhe dried the tears which fell on her face: they both ſtarted; ſhe roſe from her ſeat; he advanced, prevented her going and ſeated himſelf by her. Both were ſilent for a moment, at length Matilda, making a ſecond effort to riſe, exclaimed in a faint voice, "Bleſs me! I dare ſay I have made the family wait breakfaſt," and attempted to paſs him. "Stay, Miſs Weimar, I beſeech you; tell me why I behold you a prey to ſorrow and grief?" "Becauſe, Sir, (ſaid ſhe, withdrawing her hand) I am the child of ſorrow; I never knew another parent; poor, forlorn, proſcribed and dependant, I never can belong to any one." She ſnatched her hand, which he

he endeavoured to retain, from him, and flew like lightning towards the houſe; the Count followed, full of admiration and grief. He entered the breakfaſt room; every one was ſeated, and rallied him on his paſſion for morning rambles: his natural vivacity returned, and he tried to make himſelf agreeable and pleaſant.

They had ſcarce finiſhed breakfaſt when the Marquis received a letter from the French Ambaſſador, requeſting he might ſee him in town immediately, on an important affair. The Marquis was ſurpriſed, but gave orders for his horſes to be ready. The Counteſs trembled, Matilda was terrified; each thought herſelf concerned, and when the Marquis quitted the houſe, retired together.

"Ah! (cried the Counteſs) the Count has diſcovered me!" "No, no, madam, (replied Matilda) 'tis, I am diſcovered and ſhall

ſhall be torn from you." Both burſt into tears, equally for herſelf and friend.

The Marchioneſs, who ſaw him depart, now entered the room; "As I ſuppoſed, (ſaid ſhe) you retired to frighten each other, but that I ſhall not allow, ſo ladies, if you pleaſe, throw on your cloaks; I have made up two parties this morning for an airing: in my coach goes Lord Delby, the Count, my ſiſter, and Miſs Matilda; I accompany Mrs. Courtney, in her chariot;—ſo pray haſten directly, the carriages wait."

She withdrew on ſaying theſe words, and left them no power to frame excuſes, and conſequently they were obliged to follow, though with aching hearts.

They were diſpoſed of according to the Marchioneſs's arrangements, but for ſome minutes after the carriage proceeded all were ſilent. Lord Delby firſt ſpoke, and regretted the party did not ſeem to accord with the wiſhes

wiſhes of the ladies, if he might judge from their averted looks. " Indeed, my Lord, (replied the Counteſs) you do me particular injuſtice; I entertain the higheſt reſpect for every perſon here; to your Lordſhip I owe obligations never to be forgotten; I infinitely eſteem the Count, as a friend, and this young lady I love with the affection of a ſiſter. I have been a little agitated by the ſudden departure of the Marquis, and my uneaſineſs has communicated itſelf to my friend; we beg your pardon, and will endeavor to be better company. After this the converſation became more general and amuſing.

The Marquis proceeded to town, and inſtantly waited on the Ambaſſador. " I am ſorry, my dear Lord, (ſaid his Excellency) to have broken in upon your retirement, and muſt mention the viſit I received yeſterday as my apology. A German gentleman, who ſent in his name as Mr. Weimar, requeſted permiſſion to wait on me; he was conſequently admitted: he entered upon a long ſtory of

an

an orphan he had preſerved from periſhing, of a paper faſtened to the child, deputing him the guardian of it 'till claimed by its parents; and in ſhort, that deſpairing, from the number of years paſt, that thoſe parents had any exiſtence, he reſolved to marry the young lady, that he might provide for her without injury to her reputation; that, from what motives he knew not, ſhe had been induced to fly from his houſe, ſeducing a ſervant of his to go with her; and ſhe was now detained from him by you, notwithſtanding he had a lettre de-cachet, which he produced, commanding you to give her up; conſequently, by virtue of that order, he requeſted I would compel you to deliver the young lady to his care. Now, my dear Marquis, I am prepared to hear you on the ſubject, for it is a delicate affair, and I am convinced you would be ſorry it ſhould be noiſed abroad." "No otherwiſe, Sir, (replied the Marquis) than as it might wound the young lady's delicacy to be publicly talked off. I am obliged to your Excellency for your communications, and muſt treſpaſs

treſpaſs on your patience to elucidate the affair properly." He then recapitulated the whole of Matilda's ſtory, concealing every thing relative to the Counteſs at that time; and having deduced it down to the preſent period, he beſought his Excellency to protect an amiable young woman, under the moſt unfortunate circumſtances.

"I am really (he replied) much intereſted for her, and perfectly diſpoſed to comply with your wiſhes, but the whole affair is replete with ſo many extraordinary circumſtances, that I think we had beſt conſult the German Ambaſſador before any thing can be determined on."

The carriage was ordered, and his Excellency took the Marquis with him. They moſt fortunately found the German Miniſter at home, and after ſome deliberation it was ſettled Matilda ſhould remain under the protection of the Marquis for one year, he to be anſwerable for herd; during that interval advertiſements

ſhould

ſhould be ſent to the different kingdoms, in queſt of her parents; and if in the courſe of one twelvemonth no ſuch perſons appeared, Mr. Weimar was the natural protector of the young lady, but could not oblige her to marry him—neither could he prevent her retiring to a convent, though ſhe might be accountable to him for her choice of ſuch a retirement.

The Marquis was obliged to be contented with this deciſion, and returning with the Ambaſſador, he ſaid, "I ſhall in all probability have to trouble you again ſoon, on a ſtill more extraordinary affair, and relative to one more dear and nearer to me than this young lady." "Upon my word, Marquis, (replied the Miniſter, ſmiling) you are quite a knight-errant, to protect diſtreſſed damſels." "A very honourable employment, (anſwered the other, in the ſame tone;) but though theſe are not the days of romance, yet I have met with ſuch extraordinary incidents lately as carry much the face of the wonderful ſtories we have heard of former times: but as the deve-

development of this buſineſs will be attended with ſerious conſequences, I muſt conſider a few days before I make the diſcovery." "Very well, (ſaid his Excellency;) you have excited my curioſity, and, if I am not too old to join in a Quixote-like expedition, behold me ready to aſſiſt in the defence of the fair." The Marquis ſmiled, thanked him, and declining an invitation to dine at his houſe, got into his own carriage, and drove back with all ſpeed, rightly conceiving every one would entertain uneaſy conjectures.

The party were but juſt returned from a long morning's drive when the Marquis arrived; every one met him with anxiety in their looks—he accoſted them with a ſmiling countenance; "A truce to interrogatories at preſent, (ſaid he) I have good news for all, but I am really faint for want of refreſhment; order ſomething for me, and then I ſhall give an account of my proceedings."

Every

Every one flew to the bells, and in a moment he had chocolate, jellies, wine, and biſcuits ſet before him.

" Ah! (ſaid he, laughing) nothing like giving a little ſpur to curioſity, I ſee; this is an excellent leſſon for me how to be well ſerved."

When he had taken his repaſt, which he maliciouſly prolonged 'till the Marchioneſs in a pet rang the bell, and declared he ſhould eat no more, the things taken away, and the ſervants withdrawn. " Now liſten, ladies, and thank me for having procured, in the perſon of our gallant Ambaſſador, a Don Quixote, ready to fight in your defence." He then, in a more ſerious tone, repeated the particulars which have been already related.

Poor Matilda felt but a gleam of ſatisfaction; " A twelvemonth," (cried ſhe.) " A twelvemonth, (repeated Mrs. Courtney;) why, do you conſider, my dear girl, how

how may ſtrange events may happen in that time?" "Yes, (anſwered ſhe, ſighing) I conſider and hope death will free me from his power long before that period expires."

The Count de Bouville roſe and left the room to conceal his emotions.

"I will not forgive you, my dear child, (ſaid the Marchioneſs) if you indulge ſuch deſponding ideas; depend upon it happier days await you—truſt in Providence, and rejoice you are now free from anxiety: equally under the protection of the ambaſſadors and the Marquis, Mr. Weimar will not dare to moleſt you."

The ladies all congratulated Matilda; and, the Marchioneſs taking her hand, "Come with me into the garden, I muſt chide you, but I will not do it publicly, though you deſerve it." She led her to a little temple, at one end of the garden, and when ſeated ſhe ſaid to the ſtill ſilent Matilda, "You do not conſider

ſider the advantages we have gained." "O, my dear madam, (cried the other, interrupting her) how ſenſible I am of that kind *we* have gained!" "Well, well, (reſumed the Marchioneſs) hear me out. We can now take public methods to enquire, if there yet exiſts a being who has any claim to you, without fear of Mr. Weimar; a twelvemonth may make great alterations in his ſentiments; ſhould it appear you have no particular relations, he has no legal claim upon you, but from his expenditure for your maintenance and clothes—let him bring in his bill, he ſhall be paid to the uttermoſt farthing; you are my adopted child; conſider yourſelf as ſuch, and dare not refuſe that trifle for your future expences;—if you utter any ohs! or ahs! if you ever talk of obligations, I will never pardon you: to be cheerful and happy is the only return you can make or I accept." She then placed the deed mentioned by the Marquis, with a fifty pound note, upon the lap of the aſtoniſhed Matilda, and haſtened away to the houſe.

It was ſome moments before ſhe recovered herſelf enough to examine the papers. The contents overwhelmed her with gratitude; ſhe burſt into a flood of tears, the papers in her hand, when unexpectedly the Count ſtood before her. "Good heavens! (he cried) what means this diſtreſs, theſe tears?" "O, my Lord, (anſwered ſhe) they are tears of ſenſibility and gratitude." "I rejoice to hear it, (replied the Count) heaven forbid they ſhould ever flow from any other cauſe." He ſeated himſelf by her, ſhe dried her eyes, and put the papers in her pocket. "I congratulate you, madam, (reſumed he) on the happy turn in your affairs, which the Marquis has informed me of." "You know me then for an unhappy deſerted orphan?" (ſaid ſhe, bluſhing and mortified.) "I know you (replied he, eagerly) for the moſt amiable of your ſex; no adventitious advantages of birth or fortune can add to thoſe claims your own merit gives you to univerſal eſteem." "Ah, my Lord, (ſaid ſhe) to generous ſpirits like your's and this family's, misfortunes are a recom-

recommendation to kindneſs and attention, but with the generality of mankind I have not to learn it muſt be otherwiſe. Stranger as I am to the manners and cuſtoms of the world, I am ſenſible birth and fortune have ſuperior advantages, and that without them, though with liberal minds we may obtain compaſſion, we can never hope for conſideration or reſpect." "Pardon me, madam, (replied the Count) if I preſume to ſay you judge erroneouſly; ſhe who with merit, with good ſenſe, delicacy, and refined ſentiments can command reſpect, is a thouſand times ſuperior to thoſe whoſe inferiority of mind diſgraces a rank which the other would ennoble." "You are very kind, Sir, (ſaid Matilda, riſing, and unable to ſupport a converſation which ſhe feared might grow too intereſting for her peace:) you are truly friendly, in endeavouring to reconcile me to myſelf; and I have no way of deſerving your favorable judgment, but by conſtantly remembering what I am, that I may at leaſt preſerve my humility." She courteſied and walked faſt

towards the houſe, and to the apartment of the Counteſs. That lady was alone, her head reſting on her hand, and ſeemed buried in thought. Matilda would have withdrawn, the other entreated her return; "Come in, my dear girl, (ſaid ſhe) my own thoughts are the worſt company you could leave me in at preſent." "I come to tell you, my dear madam, (cried her young friend) that my heart is burſting with gratitude: the Marchioneſs will not hear me, but I muſt have vent for my feelings, or I ſhall be oppreſt to death." She burſt into tears. "My dear April girl, (ſaid the Counteſs) no more of thoſe ſhowers,—you have too much ſenſibility; I know what you want to tell me, therefore ſpare yourſelf the trouble, and let me acquaint you, that I am indebted to my generous brother, for a ſettlement of treble the value of what he has given you, yet I make no fuſs about the matter." "But, dear madam, (cried Matilda) ſure there is great difference in our ſituations,—you have a natural claim—" "A natural claim (repeated the Counteſs;)

Counteſs;) the beſt claim to a generous mind, is being unfortunate with merit that deſerves a better fate. I think little of thoſe favours which are beſtowed from claims of affinity only; ſince family pride, the cenſure of the world, and many cauſes, may unlock a heart to ſupport their own conſequence in their connexions, but the truly benificent mind looks upon every child of ſorrow as their relation, and entitled to their aſſiſtance; but when beauty and virtue ſuffer, from whatſoever cauſe, believe me, dear Matilda, they receive a ſuperior gratification that have the power of relieving ſorrows, than the receiver can in accepting the favors." "I believe, my dear madam, (replied Matilda, her heart warmed by the idea) I believe you are right; for if there is a human being I could envy, it would be the one who can raiſe the deſponding heart to hope and peace." "With that conviction, (reſumed the Counteſs) feel as if you conferred a favor, without the oppreſſive notion of having received one; and now pray liſten to me. My brother and

ſiſter hourly importune me to proſecute the Count: you know my objections,—God only knows whether I have a child living or not—the doubt gives me a thouſand pangs; as to the murder of the poor Chevalier, Peter only was a witneſs beſide myſelf, and he is a creature of the Count's; then to accuſe one's huſband, what an indelible reproach! I never can ſubmit to it: tell me, adviſe me, dear girl, what I muſt do?" "Impoſſible, madam, (replied ſhe;) I am incompetent to adviſe,—your own good ſenſe, and the opinion of your friends, are more capable of it than one ſo little converſant in the world as I am." "Well, (reſumed the Counteſs) I will be guided by Lord Delby and Mrs. Courtney; my own relations are too warmly intereſted in my favor to give an impartial opinion:—but pray, my dear, what do you think of our Count, is not he a charming youth?"

A queſtion ſo mal-a-propos, when poor Matilda's heart bore teſtimony to his merit, threw

threw her into the greateſt confuſion, ſhe was unable to ſpeak.

The Counteſs obſerved her emotion, but was too delicate to notice it; ſhe therefore added, "'Tis a needleſs queſtion; I ſee your ſentiments correſpond with mine; but your ſpirits are low, child—in truth mine are not high, ſo let us ſeek for better company." She aroſe, and taking Matilda's paſſive hand, led her to the drawing-room, where the company was aſſembled.

Matilda could not ſee her benefactors without being viſibly affected, which the Marchioneſs obſerving, "Come, ladies, (ſaid ſhe) give me your votes, I am collecting them for a party to Windſor to-morrow." "O, doubtleſs you may command our's (replied the Counteſs;) novelty has always its charms for us females." "Very well, (ſaid the Marquis) then it's a ſettled buſineſs."

The excurſion to Windſor, and ſeveral other places, in the fortnight they ſtaid at Mrs. Courtney's jumbled the Count and Matilda ſo frequently together, and he had ſo many opportunities of admiring her ſtrong underſtanding and poliſhed manners, that his affection was inſenſibly engaged beyond all power of reſiſtance, and he determined to brave the cenſures of the world, and marry her, if he could obtain her heart. From the moment this reſolution took place, he treated her with that inſinuating tenderneſs in his voice and manners, which ſeldom fails of communicating the infection to a ſuſceptible mind. Matilda's feelings alarmed her; ſhe was conſcious of the impropriety of indulging them, and felt the neceſſity of avoiding the Count as much as poſſible. He quickly obſerved the alteration in her behaviour, and was determined to come to an immediate explanation; juſtly conceiving nothing could be more wounding to a delicate mind than ſuſpenſe under ſuch circumſtances.

She ſo carefully ſhunned him, that it was not eaſy to find her alone; but the morning, when it was intended to return in the evening to London, chance afforded him an opportunity. The Marchioneſs, Matilda, and the Count were in the garden; the Marquis came to them and requeſted to ſpeak a few words to his Lady; She diſengaged her arm from her companion, and went with him to the houſe. Matilda turned with an intention to follow; the Count took her hand, "Let me entreat you, madam, to purſue your walk; I wiſh to ſpeak a few words, on an affair of conſequence, that will not detain you long from your friends." She trembled, and without ſpeaking, ſuffered him to conduct her to an alcove at the bottom of the garden. They were both ſeated for a minute before he could aſſume courage to ſpeak, at length, "I believe from the firſt hour I had the happineſs of being introduced to you, my admiration was very viſible, but it was that admiration which a beautiful perſon naturally inſpires,—I knew not then it was your leaſt

perfection. Your ſtory, which the Marquis related, convinced me you had every virtue which ſhould adorn your ſex, joined with a courage and perſeverance, through difficulties which might do honor even to our's. Since I have been admitted a viſitor in this houſe, I have been confirmed in the exalted opinion I entertained of your ſuperiority to moſt women, and under this conviction I may juſtly fear you will condemn my preſumption, in offering myſelf and fortune to your diſpoſal." "How, my Lord, (cried Matilda, recovering from her confuſion, and interrupting him) do you conſider who and what I am?" "Yes, madam, (replied he) I have already told you, I think you one of the moſt perfect of your ſex, and as to any other conſideration 'tis beneath my notice: if you will deign to accept of me, it ſhall be the ſtudy of my life to make you amends for the injuſtice of fortune, who blindly beſtows her favors on the unworthy." "You will pardon me, my Lord, (ſaid ſhe) for interrupting you a ſecond time, but I cannot ſuffer you to proceed in error;

error; I entreat you, therefore to hear me with patience, and believe that the ſentiments I expreſs are the genuine feelings of my heart, from which no perſuaſions, no temptations ſhall ever make me depart. I acknowledge, with a grateful mind, the honor you offer me is far beyond any expectations I can ever form in life, and ſuch as affords me both pride and pleaſure, that I am not deemed unworthy your eſteem. At the ſame time, although you can generouſly reſolve to forego the reſpect you owe to yourſelf and family, my duty to myſelf obliges me to remember it: without family and connexions, without even a name—perhaps the offspring of poor, or ſtill worſe, of infamous parents, brought up and ſupported by charity; ſhall I intrude myſelf into a noble family, contaminate it's luſtre, reflect indelible diſgrace on the author of my undeſerved elevation, and live deſpiſed and reproached, as the artful creature who had taken advantage of your generoſity and compaſſion? No, my Lord, permit me to ſay on ſuch terms I never would

condeſcend to be the wife of a prince. I ſhrink at my own littleneſs; I am in a ſtate of obligation for my ſupport, but I never will incur my own contempt, by deſerving it from others. My mind is indeed, I hope, ſuperior to my ſituation: I will preſerve a rectitude of principles under every evil that may befal me; thoſe principles impel me to avow, with the greateſt ſolemnity in the face of heaven, that under the diſgraceful circumſtances in which my fate ſeems enveloped, I never will be yours." "Hold, hold, madam, (cried the Count, endeavouring to interrupt her) great God! what have you vowed!" "What duty to myſelf and you required of me, (ſaid ſhe;) and now, my Lord, let this ſubject never be renewed. If it can afford you any conſolation, (added ſhe, ſoftened by the diſorder and diſtreſs of his appearance) be aſſured, my Lord, that as I never can be your's, I never will be another's; and if my happineſs is as dear to you as your's will ever be to me, you will from this moment ceaſe to think of me but as an unfortunate girl, deprived

prived of all power to return obligations, and therefore with too much pride and ſpirit to receive them, but from this worthy family, where I conceive it no diſgrace to hold myſelf dependent."

As ſhe ended theſe words ſhe roſe. " Stop one moment, madam, (exclaimed the Count;) unleſs you would drive me to madneſs, afford me one gleam of hope, diſtant as it may be: your cruel vow precludes me from bliſs, yet tell me, too lovely Matilda, that you do not hate me, that if——"

" Ah! Sir, (ſaid ſhe, involuntarily) hate you! Heaven is my witneſs, that did my birth and rank equal your's, it would be my my glory, to accept your hand; but as there exiſts not a poſſibility of that, I beſeech you to ſpare me and yourſelf unneceſſary pain; from this inſtant determine to avoid me, and I will eſteem you as the moſt exalted of men."

Without giving him time to reply, ſhe darted like lightning towards the houſe, leaving him overwhelmed with admiration, grief, and deſpair.

" What are the advantages of birth and rank, (cried he) which this ſweet girl does not poſſeſs? A dignity of ſentiment, a rectitude of heart;—how greatly ſuperior to that wretch Fontelle, whoſe malicious ſtories have ſo much injured her reputation, and whoſe birth and fortune only render her the more deſpicable; as mine muſt be to me of no value, when conſidered as bars to happineſs and Matilda."

He walked ſlowly to the houſe and met the Marquis. " Dear Count, (ſaid he) what have you done or ſaid to my amiable protogée; I met her running up ſtairs, out of breath, and tears trembling in her eyes?" The Count, without the leaſt reſerve, repeated the preceding converſation. " And did you really make ſuch an offer, (cried he) and did ſhe

ſhe refuſe it?" "'Tis very true," (replied the Count.) "Why then (ſaid the Marquis) you are two of the nobleſt creatures under heaven; that you, my worthy friend, ſhould ſtep beyond the prejudices of your country—that you ſhould reſolve to brave the cenſure, the malevolent whiſpers and contemptuous neglect of your equals, and ſupport the inſolent deriſion of your inferiors, in favour of a young woman under ſuch peculiarly diſtreſſing circumſtances, excites my wonder and admiration: but I ſcarce know any words that can do juſtice to my ſentiments, when I reflect that this very young woman, without friends or fortune, from a ſenſe of rectitude, and a loftineſs of ſentiment which would do honor to the higheſt rank, could peremptorily refuſe a ſituation and proſpects ſo brilliant—do violence to her own heart, and prefer a dependence her ſoul is much ſuperior to, rather than incur ſelf-reproach for your degradation. Indeed, my Lord, I know not any language ſufficiently expreſſive of my feelings: you muſt admire her more than ever."

ever." "Doubt not, (anſwered the Count, in a melancholy tone) of my more than admiration—my adoration; but, alas! ſhe is inflexible—ſhe has ſworn never to be mine—ſhe has charged me to ſee her, to think of her, no more." "Do her juſtice, my Lord, and obey her; prove your eſteem for ſuch an extraordinary exertion of virtue and prudence, imitate an example ſo deſerving praiſe, and be aſſured the trial, however ſevere at preſent, will afford you ſatisfaction hereafter, in ſubduing love, though your higheſt eſteem ſhe has a right to challenge." "Say no more, Marquis, (cried the Count;) I muſt ceaſe to think of her before I can ceaſe to love, for this day has riveted my chains more firmly than ever. I will not however be an inmate of your houſe; though I cannot relinquiſh the charms of her ſociety altogether, yet I promiſe you I will indulge in no more dangerous tete-à-tetes, but I muſt ſee her ſometimes." "Ah! Count," (ſaid the Marquis, ſhaking his head.) "Truſt my honour and diſcretion, (replied he, to his ſignificant looks;)

"you

you may, for that angelic girl will never put them to the proof."

They proceeded to the houſe, and the carriages drawing up, the party was collected together. Matilda contrived to accompany the Marquis, his Lady, and Mrs. Courtney. The two latter kept up a ſprightly converſation with the Marquis, and but once or twice broke in upon her reveries; yet ſhe appeared eaſy and cheerful; in truth, the delight of being dear to the amiable Count, and a conſciouſneſs of having performed her duty, gave that peace and ſerenity to her mind which never fails of communicating itſelf to the countenance.

On their arrival in Harley-ſtreet the party ſeparated, and the Count was compelled to accept an invitation from Lord Delby, to reſide with him. "The Marquis, (ſaid his Lordſhip) has his family party, but I am alone, and therefore you will do me particular

lar honor and pleaſure in complying with my wiſhes."

As the Count could not reſide with the Marquis, this was certainly the next beſt ſituation, for his Lordſhip was himſelf too fond of the "family party" to be long abſent from them; he therefore gladly accompanied him to Cavendiſh-ſquare.

They had been now near a fortnight in town, enjoying its variety of amuſements, and preparing for their journey to Scarborough, which was now to take place in four days. The birth-day being arrived, the Marquis, his Lady and the Count propoſed paying their compliments at court, with Lord Delby: the Count had been previouſly preſented. The Counteſs (ſtill known even by the Count only as Madame Le Roche) Mrs. Courtney, and Matilda, contented themſelves with attending the ball, at night, in the Lord Chamberlain's box. They were accordingly accommodated with an excellent

ſituation

ſituation, and were extremely charmed with the beauty and ſplendor of the Britiſh court.

Matilda's eyes were ſo intently fixed on the Royal Family, ſhe had ſcarce thought of looking round her, until ſome audible whiſpers in French reached her ear; turning her head quickly, her eyes met thoſe of Mademoiſelle De Fontelle. A ſtranger to the malice of that young lady, ſhe bowed with a ſmile, being rather too diſtant to ſpeak; the lady gave her a look of contempt, and ſpeaking low to the perſon next her; before Matilda could recover from her ſurpriſe and confuſion, ſhe obſerved three or four perſons look full at her, with ſcorn and diſdain ſtrongly marked in their features. Shocked beyond meaſure at this to her unaccountable behaviour, ſhe turned ſick and faint, was obliged to have recourſe to her ſalts, and heard a laughing whiſper on one ſide of her, whilſt the Counteſs on the other was eagerly enquiring the cauſe of her illneſs. Her ſalts, and natural dignity of mind ſoon enabled her

to

to recover. She evaded the curioſity of her friend, by complaining of the heat, and declaring herſelf better. She then turned her head towards Fontelle and her companions; ſhe viewed them with a ſteady air of the higheſt contempt and indifference, 'till even the eyes of that malicious girl fell under her's, and ſhe was evidently confuſed. Matilda then returned to the amuſements below her, and, though her mind was not eaſy, ſhe appeared to enjoy uncommon ſatisfaction.

When the Royal Family had withdrawn, and they were about to quit their ſeats, they perceived Lord Delby and the Count making way to aſſiſt them in getting out. The latter had no eyes but for Matilda, 'till a ſudden exclamation, and his name, caught his ear in the moment he had preſented his hand to her; quickly turning, he ſaw Mademoiſelle De Fonteile and her aunt Madame Le Brune, Surpriſed and vexed, he darted at them a look of ſcorn, and with an air of the higheſt reſpect and attention, aſſiſted Matilda into

into the room, joined her friends, and they were ſafely conveyed through the crowd to their carriage,—Lord Delby and himſelf following in their's.

When they alighted in Harley-ſtreet, Matilda, who had ſuppreſſed her feelings in the ball room, and had been likewiſe deeply affected by the Count's attentions, ſcarcely entered the drawing room before ſhe fainted: every one was alarmed, but the Count was diſtracted; his behaviour diſcovered the ſecrets of his heart to all the company, and when ſhe recovered, ſhe ſaw him on his knees, holding one of her hands, whilſt his air of diſtraction was but too expreſſive of his feelings; ſhe withdrew her hand, and he aroſe; ſhe apologized to the company, and imputed her diſorder to the heat of the room, and the ſudden chill ſhe felt in getting out of the carriage. Her friends, glad to ſee her recovered, enquired no further, but the Count drew the Marquis out of the room, and in much agitation, cried out, "That perſecuting fiend,

fiend, in a female form, is the cauſe of her illneſs." "Who do you mean?" (demanded the Marquis.) "Who ſhould I mean, (anſwered he, warmly) but that malicious Fontelle; I ſaw her not far from Matilda, and I dare ſay ſhe inſulted her; but, by heavens! if ſhe propagates her infamous falſehoods here, ſhe ſhall repent it, however ſhe may truſt to my honor."

The Marquis was a little ſurpriſed at this ſally, but without appearing to obſerve it, ſaid, "You know, Count, we ſhall leave town three days hence, and conſequently be out of her malice. I wonder what brought her to England." "Spite and envy (replied he;) but does the amiable girl know how much Mademoiſelle De Fontelle is her enemy?" "No certainly (anſwered the Marquis;) you do not ſuppoſe we would wound her feelings, by repeating the diſagreeable reports ſpread among our acquaintance at Paris." "I am glad of it, (ſaid the Count) yet I cannot but think the other affronted her." "We ſhall know

know to-morrow, but let us return and eat our ſupper now."

They went down to the ſupper room, and were much pleaſed in beholding Matilda cheerful and perfectly well.

When the company ſeparated, and ſhe was retired to her apartment, ſhe gave way to her own reflections; ſhe could no otherwiſe account for the impertinence of Mademoiſelle De Fontelle, but by ſuppoſing ſhe was acquainted with her birth; "Ah! (ſaid ſhe) I doubt not but Mr. Weimar publiſhed it at Paris, from motives of revenge, and ſhe, who as a relation to the Marchioneſs, received a thouſand civilities, is now deſpiſed as an impoſter; an orphan, and a dependent on charity; nay, even my benefactors may ſuffer in the opinion of their friends for introducing me! Good heavens! (cried ſhe) why ſhould I continue in the world—why aſſume a character and appearance I have no pretenſions to? What blameable pride, what meanneſs, in

in accepting gifts which draw upon me contempt and deriſion—I will no longer ſupport it."

Tormented all night by the diſtreſs of her ſituation, ſhe aroſe unrefreſhed, pale, feeble and agitated.

The Marchioneſs, alarmed at her appearance, inſiſted upon ſending for a phyſician; the Marquis was going to pull the bell. "Stay, my dear friends, (cried ſhe) I beſeech you; 'tis my mind, not my body, that is diſordered, and you only have the power to heal it." "Speak your wiſhes, my dear child, (ſaid the Marchioneſs;) be aſſured, if in our power, you may command the grant of them." "On that promiſe, my deareſt benefactreſs, your poor Matilda founds her hopes of peace." She then repeated the affronts of the preceding evening, and her own conjectures upon it. "I am humbled, my deareſt madam, as all falſe pretenders ought to be, (added ſhe:) I can no longer ſupport the

the upbraidings of my heart; a falſe pride, a deſpicable vanity induced me to lay hold of your ſentiments in my favour, which, after the diſcovery of my original meanneſs, I ought to have bluſhed at your condeſcenſion, and ſought ſome humble ſituation, or retired to a convent, where, unknowing and unknown, I might have purſued the lowly path Providence ſeems to have pointed out for me. I have been puniſhed for my preſumption and duplicity—it has made me look into myſelf; doubtleſs, out of this family, every one beholds me with the ſcorn and contempt I have juſtly incurred from Mademoiſelle De Fontelle, and all who know my doubtful origin. O, my beloved friends, (cried ſhe, wringing her hands, tears running down her cheeks) ſave me from future inſults, ſave me from ſelf-reproach! complete your generoſity and goodneſs, and let me retire to a convent. My poor endeavours to amuſe you as a companion are no longer neceſſary; the Counteſs is reſtored to you, and I have only been a ſource of vexation and trouble ever ſince the hour you

you firſt condeſcended to receive me;—a convent is the only aſylum I ought to wiſh for, and there only I can find reſt." Here ſhe ſtopt, overwhelmed with the moſt painful emotions.

The Marquis was affected, the Marchioneſs drowned in tears. "My dear, but too ſuſceptible girl, (ſaid ſhe, when able to ſpeak) why will you thus unneceſſarily torment yourſelf; what is Fontelle and her opinions to us? We are going to Scarborough; you have friends who will protect you from every inſult,—who will treat you with increaſed reſpect, from a conviction that your mind is ſuperior to all the advantages which birth and fortune has given to Mademoiſelle De Fontelle, or a thouſand ſuch: beſides, depend upon my aſſertions,—you ſprung not from humble or diſhoneſt parents,—the virtues you poſſeſs are hereditary ones, doubt it not, my dear Matilda; if nobleneſs of birth can add any luſtre to qualities like your's, you will one day poſſeſs that advantage."

'Tis

'Tis impoſſible to expreſs the agitations of Matilda, on hearing ſuch kind and conſoling ſentiments; but her reſolution to retire from the world was unconquerable; ſhe found her heart too tenderly attached to the Count—ſhe knew the impoſſibility that ſhe ſhould ever be his; ſhe was convinced her ſtory was known, her friends had not attempted to deny it; in whatever public place ſhe might viſit, it was very poſſible to meet perſons who had heard it, and ſhe might be expoſed to ſimilar inſults, which her ſpirit could not brook.

The Marquis and his lady made uſe of perſuaſions, arguments, and even reproaches, but ſhe had ſo much reſolution and fortitude, when once ſhe had formed a deſign, approved by her judgment, as could not be eaſily ſhaken; and though her heart was wounded with ſorrow, and her mind impreſſed with grief, in being obliged to reſiſt the kindneſs of her friends, yet ſhe ſtill perſevered.

"Well, Matilda, (ſaid the Marchioneſs, in a reproachful tone) ſince you are inflexible to our wiſhes, I muſt inſiſt upon your going with me to Mrs. Courtney's: what will ſhe, what will my ſiſter think, but that I have treated you ill, and you can no longer remain with one you have ceaſed to love."

"Kill me not, (cried ſhe, in an agony) with ſuch reproaches; let me fly to the Counteſs and diſcloſe my reaſons—ah! ſurely ſhe will do more juſtice to my heart: oh! madam, that you could ſee it—that you could read the love, the admiration and reſpect indelibly imprinted there, with your image, never, never to be eraſed whilſt it beats within my boſom."

Overcome with theſe ſenſations, ſhe wept aloud; the Marchioneſs embraced and ſoothed her.

The carriage was ordered, and they drove to Mrs. Courtney's, the Marquis ſetting them down, and going on to Lord Delby's.

It

It is needleſs to repeat what paſſed at Mrs. Courtney's, ſince it was only a repetition of every argument and perſuaſion which her protectors had before uſed in vain. Nothing could ſhake her reſolution; and all the favour they could obtain, was to permit Louiſon and Antoine to accompany her to Boulogne, and remain in a convent there, 'till her friends returned to France, and the twelvemonth expired Mr. Weimar had allowed her to remain under the care of the Marquis.

Whilſt every countenance ſpoke pity, grief, and admiration, the gentlemen ſuddenly entered the room, the Count with an air of wildneſs and diſtreſs. The moment Matilda ſaw him ſhe trembled violently, and could with difficulty keep her ſeat. "Ah! madam, (ſaid he) what is it I hear—is it poſſible you mean to abandon your friends, to diſtreſs the moſt affectionate hearts in the world, to give up ſociety, and, from romantic notions, bury yourſelf in a convent? Hear me thus publicly, (cried he, throwing himſelf at her feet,

with a frantic look) hear me avow myſelf your lover, your protector, and if you will condeſcend to accept of me, your huſband; yes, that is the enviable diſtinction I aſpire to; plead for me, my friends,—ſoften the obdurate heart that would conſign me to everlaſting miſery. Oh! Matilda, cruel, unfeeling girl, has a proud and unrelenting ſpirit ſubdued every tender and compaſſionate ſentiment,—has neither love nor friendſhip any claims upon your heart?" His emotions were violent.

The ladies, 'till now, ſtrangers to his ſentiments, ſat mute with wonder.

Matilda had covered her face with her handkerchief; when he ſtopt ſhe withdrew it; it was wet with tears: he ſnatched it from her trembling hand, kiſſed it, and thruſt it into his boſom. "I beſeech you, Sir, to riſe, (ſaid ſhe, when able to ſpeak) this poſture is unbecoming of yourſelf and me. The reſolution I have formed is ſuch as my reaſon

reaſon approves, and my particular circumſtances call upon me to adopt; I ought to have done it long ago, and bluſh at my own folly in delaying it." "But, good God! madam, (interrupted the Count) can the ridiculous behaviour, or unjuſt prejudices of one worthleſs woman weigh againſt the affections, the eſteem of ſo many reſpectable friends? What have we done to deſerve being rendered miſerable through her envy and malice?" "Could the warmeſt love, gratitude and reſpect, which I owe to every one here (anſwered ſhe;) could the arguments of the moſt condeſcending kindneſs, deeply imprinted here (putting her hand to her heart) could theſe avail to alter my purpoſe, I might not be able to withſtand your perſuaſions; but, my Lord, when I have had fortitude ſufficient to deny thoſe who are dearer to me than life, you cannot be offended, that 'tis impoſſible for me to oblige you; and here, in the preſence of thoſe who have been witneſſes to the honors you have offered me, I releaſe you from every vow, every obligation your too

rdent love has conferred on me, and from this hour beſeech you to think of me as a friend, zealous for your honor and happineſs, for your fame, and the reſpect you owe to your family; but equally jealous of every duty I owe myſelf, and therefore determined to ſee you no more." She roſe quickly from her chair, and ran into Mrs. Courtney's dreſſing-room, giving way to a violent burſt of tears. The aſtoniſhed Count, who had not the power to prevent her departure, threw himſelf into a chair, without ſpeaking. The Counteſs had followed Matilda.

"This is really (ſaid Mrs. Courtney) the moſt extraordinary young woman I ever met with; I wonder not at your attachment, my dear Count, but after this public declaration, you have nothing to hope for: imitate her example of fortitude and ſelf-denial, and ſuffer not your mind to be depreſſed, when it is neceſſary you ſhould exert man's boaſted ſuperiority of reaſon and firmneſs." The Count replied not.

The

The Marchioneſs looked with a little ſurpriſe at Mrs. Courtney, who ſhe thought appeared leſs affected than ſhe ought for her young friend.

Lord Delby was warm in her praiſe, and offered to be her eſcort to Boulogne, as he thought it highly improper ſhe ſhould be accompanied by ſervants only.

This offer was thankfully accepted by the Marchioneſs. "She has abſolutely prohibited the Marquis and myſelf, (ſaid ſhe) but I hope will make no objections to the honor you intend her."

The Count, making a ſlight apology, withdrew, and every one joined in pitying the neceſſity for a ſeparation of two perſons ſo worthy of each other. "Was fortune the only obſtacle her delicacy could raiſe, (ſaid the Marquis) there are thoſe who would rejoice to remove it; but when we conſider the particular diſadvantages of her ſituation—

the diſgrace and inſults which would attend the Count, from her want of birth, however great her merit: unjuſt as I know thoſe prejudices are, yet I confeſs it would have given me pain, had ſhe acted otherwiſe. I applaud, I admire, I love her more than ever, but I do not wiſh to ſee her the Count's wife, unleſs thoſe bars could be removed, which now appear next to an impoſſibility." "No! (cried the Marchioneſs, briſkly) no! I will not believe, merit like Matilda's is born to wither in the ſhade; I will hope to ſee her one day in a conſpicuous point of view, that may reflect honor on all who are connected with her, either by blood or friendſhip."

"You are romantic, my dear madam, (ſaid Mrs. Courtney, with a ſmile;) but ſuppoſe we go to your young favorite, and ſee how the poor thing does after her heroics."

This was ſaid with ſo little feeling, that the Marchioneſs was ſurpriſed; and a ſudden idea darting into the mind of the Marquis, he could not

not ſuppreſs a ſmile, whilſt Lord Delby looked offended with his ſiſter's light manner of ſpeaking.

Under theſe different impreſſions they entered the dreſſing-room, and found poor Matilda reclining her head on the Counteſs, and both weeping. "Fie, fie, my good friend, (ſaid Mrs. Courtney) is this the way to comfort the young lady, for the ſacrifices ſhe has made to honor and principle." "I adore your ſenſibility, madam, (cried Lord Delby, haſtily;) in my opinion, who ever loves Miſs Matilda does honor to their own heart."

Both ladies bowed to his lordſhip, though unable to ſpeak; but endeavouring to recover themſelves, the Counteſs ſaid, "This dear obſtinate girl propoſes ſetting off the day after to-morrow." "Well, and if ſhe is ſo determined, what hinders us from all taking a trip to Dover, previous to our Scarborough journey?" (ſaid Lord Delby.)

Every one agreed to the propoſal, after which they ſought to amuſe their minds, by talking on different ſubjects.

The Counteſs and Mrs. Courtney accompanied the Marchioneſs home to dinner, but Lord Delby excuſed himſelf, that he might attend to the Count. On his return to Cavendiſh-ſquare he was informed his gueſt was in the library. He found him writing, and would have retired; the Count requeſted he would ſit down: the converſation naturally turned on the recent occurrences in Harley-ſtreet. "Don't think meanly of me, my dear Lord, (ſaid the Count) if I cannot help gratifying a little malice and revenge; I have juſt finiſhed a few lines to Mademoiſelle De Fontelle; I will, at leaſt, make her remember ſhe is in my power, and tremble every moment, leſt I ſhould put my threats in execution; I will plant a thorn in her boſom, if ſhe is capable of feeling, though, alas! I can never draw the one from my breaſt ſhe has been the cauſe of transfixing there for life! I ſhall ſend

to the Ambaſſador's, to procure her addreſs, as doubtleſs from old acquaintance Madame Le Brune has been to pay her reſpects to his lady, and that is the only clue at preſent, I have to find her."

When Lord Delby acquainted him the day was fixed for Matilda's departure, and their intended jaunt with her, " Ah ! (ſaid he) how hard, that the perſon moſt intereſted in that event ſhould be precluded from being a witneſs of it, though I know I could not ſtand the ſhock." " If my ſiſter does not accompany us, which I rather doubt, as one coach cannot hold them, and I intend going on horſeback, there being no neceſſity for great expedition, I ſhall conſign her to your care, my dear Count, in our abſence." " If Mrs. Courtney will accept the attendance of ſuch a ſpiritleſs being as myſelf, (anſwered he) I ſhall be honoured by permiſſion to wait upon her."

Not to dwell on the melancholy circumſtances of parting, when nothing new or particular occured, 'tis ſufficient to ſay both parties were overwhelmed with grief, and Matilda ſubmitted, with much reluctance, to Lord Delby's going in the packet with her; but her friends all proteſting, if ſhe refuſed, every one would go, ſhe was obliged to acquieſce; and embracing the two ladies a thouſand times, with ſtreaming eyes, ſhe tore herſelf from them and embarked.

The wind was fair; they reached Boulogne in ſeven hours; and whilſt they partook of ſome refreſhment at the hotel, Louiſon and Antoine walked to the Urſuline Convent, in the high town, and having acquainted the portereſs with their errand, found, to their great mortification, they took no ladies in chamber, or high penſioners. They were directed to the Annunciate Convent, and there ſoon procured admiſſion, and accommodations for Matilda, and Louiſon, who gladly attended her, thinking it would be only for a

ſhort

ſhort time, 'till her lady came from England.

Within a few hours Matilda was received and ſettled. She took leave of Lord Delby with tears of gratitude. "Ah! (ſaid he, much moved) not one word of remembrance to my worthy gueſt?" "Yes, Sir, (ſaid ſhe, raiſing her voice) tell him I admire, I eſteem him—that his happineſs is the firſt wiſh of my heart. 'Take care, my dear Lord, of the worthy Count; teach him to forget me, and if ever he ſhould be united to an amiable woman, deſerving and poſſeſſing his affection, I will then boldly claim his eſteem—'till then we muſt be for ever ſeparated."

She entered the gates, unable to ſay more, and when they were ſhut upon her, Lord Delby, overcome with pity and admiration, returned to the hotel; that ſame evening reembarked for Dover, and joined his friends before nine the next morning.

Spiritleſs

Spiritleſs and unhappy, they arrived in Harley-ſtreet the following evening, and ſending a meſſenger to Mrs. Courtney, that lady ſhortly after entered the houſe, the Count with her; ſhe cheerful and lively, he looking pale and dejected. She enquired, with an air of indifference, the particulars of their journey, but ſeemed little intereſted in it; not ſo the Count, he aſked a thouſand queſtions. "I have a meſſage to you from the amiable Matilda," (ſaid Lord Delby.) "For me, (ſaid the Count, eagerly;) O! why have you delayed it?" His Lordſhip repeated her laſt words. "Sweet angelic girl! (cried he) is my happineſs dear to her! but why ſhould I doubt it? ſhe is truth and goodneſs itſelf; my eſteem, my love, muſt ever be hers, for no other woman ſhall ever poſſeſs that heart ſhe condeſcended to prize, and never will I marry, if Matilda cannot be my wife." "Lord bleſs me! (exclaimed Mrs. Courtney) let's have no more diſmals; I declare theſe laſt five days have vapoured me to death: I hope our journey to Scarborough

will

will teem with more pleaſant incidents than your's to Dover ſeems to have produced." "I am ſure ſo (anſwered the Count;) the world does not abound with characters like Matilda's to lament."

No more was ſaid; ſupper was announced, and more general converſation introduced during the remainder of the evening, though every one appeared abſent and uneaſy.

After the company had left them the Marchioneſs took notice of Mrs. Courtney's behaviour. "Surely ſhe has taken ſome pique againſt Matilda," (ſaid ſhe.) "Yes, (replied the Marquis) the pique natural to a jealous woman." "Jealous! (repeated the Marchioneſs) why, ſurely you do not think ſhe is fond of the Count?" "Indeed, but I do (replied he;) nay, I am certain of it, from many obſervations I lately made on her conduct." "Bleſs me! (returned ſhe) why Mrs. Courtney is ſeven or eight and thirty, the Count only two and twenty." "That's true,

true, (ſaid he, ſmiling) but my love ladies have various ways of concealing their age, and the depredations of time; beſides, vanity never forſakes them; and to do Mrs. Courtney juſtice, ſhe is an agreeable woman." "Yes, and a ſenſible woman, (returned ſhe;) I never can ſuppoſe her guilty of ſuch a weakneſs; I rather think her prejudiced againſt Matilda, by ſome falſehoods or other." "Very well, (replied the Marquis) be it ſo: I am always more gratified by your favorable opinion of your own ſex, than a readineſs to condemn them; the one ſhews a generous mind, free from guile itſelf—the other, a malignant ſpirit, deſirous of acquiring merit from the deficiencies of others." "But, pray, (ſaid the Marchioneſs) how will you account to Mr. Weimar for the retirement of Matilda, ſhould he hear of it, and apply to you?" "By the ſimpleſt truth, (replied he) except what relates to Bouville. He muſt thank himſelf for all the ſtories Mademoiſelle De Fontelle has repeated to her diſadvantage, and from whence originated her ſudden determination. She is now ſafe; the

letter

letter I procured from the Ambaſſador, addreſſed to any convent, at leaſt, the ſuperior of it, will always protect her, ſince mine is the only claim ſhe is ſubject to."

Tranquilliſed by this, the Marchioneſs recommended her young friend to the care of Providence, and retired to reſt with a virtuous heart, and an eaſy mind, which could not fail of producing quiet and refreſhing ſlumbers.

The Count, Lord Delby, and Mrs. Courtney, were not equally happy. The former, more ſenſible every hour of Matilda's worth, curſed the pride of birth, which ſtood between him and happineſs, and determined to live only for her. Lord Delby had been many years a widower; he had only one ſon, whom he carried to Switzerland, at the time the Counteſs ſo fortunately obtained his protection: he was then extremely ſtruck with her appearance; beauty in diſtreſs has a thouſand claims upon a ſuſceptible mind; but the Counteſs

Counteſs had good ſenſe, ſweetneſs of temper, and delicacy of manners to recommend her; and though the firſt bloom of beauty was worn off, ſhe had ſufficient charms both of mind and body to procure for her the admiration of any man. Lord Delby conceived a very warm affection for her, though he knew it was entirely hopeleſs, unleſs death ſhould rid her of her perſecutor; he was therefore condemned to ſilence on a ſubject neareſt his heart, and felt the reſtraint very painfully. Mrs. Courtney, from the firſt moment ſhe beheld the Count, was charmed with his perſon and manners. She had been a widow four years: when about three and twenty, at the requeſt of her father, Lord Delby, and the temptations of a very capital fortune, ſuperb carriages, fine jewels, and thoſe other avenues to the heart of a young and faſhionable female, ſhe gave her hand to Mr. Courtney, who was ſtruck with her perſon, and thinking it right to have an heir to his immenſe poſſeſſions, ſuſpended for a time the delights of Newmarket, and his favorite ſprightly,

ſprightly, to attend the laws of Hymen; but in a very few weeks his former propenſity returned; his young bride was forſaken for the pleaſures of the turf, Newmarket, it's jockies, it's tumultuous purſuits, deep bets, and jovial companions, engroſſed all his time and attention. His lady, happily for her, was not doatingly fond of her huſband; ſhe was poſſeſſed of every appendage proper for a female in faſhionable life, and outſhone two-thirds of her acquaintance in jewels, plate, carriages, and dreſs; ſhe was therefore extremely eaſy about the abſence of her huſband, and whilſt he neither contracted her expences, nor deprived her of the amuſements ſhe liked, ſhe was perfectly diſpoſed to ſhew him the ſame complaiſance. This very modiſh pair lived ſome years together, without feeling either pleaſure or pain, from their different engagements. Mr. Courtney was at firſt much diſappointed by not having an heir, but time reconciled him to an event he could not remove; and having determined to make a diſtant relation, who was to inherit his eſtate,

take

take his name by Act of Parliament, he ceaſed giving himſelf any further concern about the matter. They had been married upwards of ten years, when unfortunately taking cold, after very hard riding, a violent fever terminated his life in ſix days, and his diſconſolate widow was left to undergo all the forms and ceremonies of deep mourning, and to wear odious black for three months. This ſtate of mortification being rubbed through, ſhe found herſelf miſtreſs of all her former finery, and a very noble jointure, to live as ſhe pleaſed. Mrs. Courtney was good-natured, not from principle but conſtitution; ſhe hated trouble of any ſort, therefore bore any thing, rather than have the fatigue of being out of humour; ſhe was polite and friendly, where ſhe had no temptation to be otherwiſe; in ſhort, ſhe had many negative virtues, without any active ones. Such was Mrs. Courtney, when ſhe appeared in this book firſt. All men were indifferent alike, 'till ſhe ſaw the engaging Count; a few interviews decided her fate; ſhe found ſhe loved to exceſs, and

and hated Matilda in proportion; ſhe diſcovered his partiality in her favor, long before it was publicly known, and ſought to recommend herſelf to his notice, by paying attention to his favorite; but finding all her endeavours ineffectual, ſhe began to diſlike the innocent object of her jealouſy, and was caſting about in her mind how to get rid of her, when Matilda unexpectedly declared her intention of going into a convent. The Count's ſubſequent behaviour, his public declaration and proteſtations, were mortifying circumſtances, 'tis true, but ſhe depended upon time, abſence, and her own endeavours, to conquer a paſſion he could not but look upon as hopeleſs. The Counteſs, ſo many years ſecluded from the world, at firſt felt only the warmeſt gratitude to Mrs. Courtney and her brother, for their generous protection; but the polite attention, the mark'd kindneſs of Lord Delby, inſpired her with the moſt perfect eſteem for him,—and though, from the melancholy circumſtances which attended her early preposſeſſion, her heart was dead to love, ſhe yet

yet experienced all that partiality in his Lordſhip's favor which her heart was capable of feeling.

Such was the ſtate and ſentiments of the party, now about to ſet off for Scarborough. The day previous to which, after a conſultation between the Marquis, his Lady, and the Counteſs, on the entrance of the Count, to pay his morning compliments, the Marquis led him to the Counteſs, "My dear friend, you have hitherto known this lady only as Madame Le Roche, the name ſhe bears in England; I now introduce you to her as our deareſt ſiſter, the Counteſs of Wolfenbach, whoſe death you have heard us often lament."

The Count ſtarted with ſurpriſe; "Good heavens! (ſaid he, after ſaluting her) how is this poſſible?"

The Marquis gave him a brief recital of her confinement, and promiſed him the particulars another day. "I could no longer keep

keep our ſecret from you, but ſhe muſt ſtill retain her former name, until the whole affair is brought forward. The Ambaſſador was made acquainted with it yeſterday; he will take ſome private ſteps, at firſt, if poſſible, to do us juſtice; and when we return to London for the winter, we ſhall uſe deciſive meaſures; mean time, I have written to a friend, as has likewiſe my ſiſter, to procure Joſeph's teſtimony, as far as his knowledge extends, leſt, as he is old, we ſhould loſe a witneſs of ſome conſequence."

The Count entered warmly into the buſineſs; his life and fortune was at the ſervice of his friends: they embraced and thanked him.

The following day they left town, after writing the moſt affectionate letters to their beloved Matilda, whoſe abſence they moſt ſincerely regretted.

Matilda,

Matilda, on her firſt reſidence in the convent, found it replete with many inconveniences ſhe did not expect. For the firſt week ſhe cried inceſſantly, and poor Louiſon, not happier, continually preſt her to return. "Ah, mon Dieu! (cried ſhe) if my good maſter and lady, if the dear charming Count de Bouville knew how miſerable you are, they would fly to bring you out again. Ah! the good Count, the morning before we came away, gave me ten Engliſh guineas; the tears were in his eyes; "Take care of your charming miſtreſs, Louiſon, (ſaid he) and I will always be your friend:"—Dear, dear gentleman! O, that he was but here!"

This little anecdote, which one might have ſuppoſed would have added to Matilda's grief, proved a moſt ſalutary remedy for it: ſhe inſtantly dried her eyes. "Amiable, generous man! (ſaid ſhe) ſhall I repine, that I have devoted myſelf to retirement to preſerve a mind like his from repentance and ſelf-reproach, and from the diſdain of thoſe low-

low-minded people, incapable of the nobleneſs of heart which would prompt him to forget his own dignity, to raiſe a friendleſs orphan. No; I will at leaſt prove deſerving of his eſteem, by my own ſelf-denial; I will ſupport every inconvenience, every trial with reſignation—happy, if, in ſacrificing the trifling amuſements the world affords, I can promote his peace, and ſecure his future happineſs."

Fortified by theſe generous ſentiments, ſhe no longer wept or ſighed; ſhe ſought conſolation in the practice of her religious duties, which ſtrengthened her mind and compoſed her ſpirits: ſhe found in the uniform obſervance of piety, charity, and compaſſion towards the ſick and unfortunate, that peace which the world could not give, and that ſerenity of mind which no recollection of misfortunes could deprive her of.

She became the admiration of the whole community; every one was deſirous of her

favor, but Matilda, bleſt with uncommon penetration, and capable of the niceſt diſcrimination, was at no loſs to diſtinguiſh the ſelfiſh and fulſome attentions of the officious, from the approbation of the worthy and humble few who looked on her with eyes of kindneſs, but never intruded; from theſe few, to whom ſhe payed particular civility, her heart ſelected mother St. Magdalene; ſhe was about eight and twenty, and had been a nun nearly ten years; ſhe was one of thoſe very elegant forms you cannot behold without admiration; her face was more expreſſive than beautiful, yet more engaging than a lifeleſs ſet of features without animation, however perfect or blooming, could poſſibly be; ſhe was pious without oſtentation, kind and affectionate to her ſiſterhood, and courteous, without deſign or meanneſs, to the penſioners.

This charming woman ſoon attracted the notice of Matilda,—ſhe ſought her company and converſation—ſhe received her attentions with particular complacency.

Mother

Mother Magdalene was ſenſible of her civilities—ſhe plainly comprehended the value of them, but from peculiar notions of delicacy, and to avoid giving umbrage to the ſiſterhood, ſhe rather repreſſed than encouraged her particular kindneſs. Matilda, however, would not be repulſed, and Magdalene was at length compelled to be her "Dear Mother."

They were frequently together, and by her example Matilda was encouraged to the perſeverance in every moral and religious duty.

Letters from her two friends, the Marchioneſs and Counteſs, were the only things ſhe permitted to break in upon them, and thoſe letters were a continual ſtimulation to a ſenſe of gratitude and generoſity, which ſhe found herſelf called upon to exert.

Whilſt Matilda had thus happily reconciled her mind to her ſituation, her friends were enjoying the amuſements that Scarborough afforded.

The Count was always the attendant on Mrs. Courtney; and though his paſſion was as fervent as ever, and his regrets as powerful for the loſs of Matilda, he could not be always in company with an amiable woman, who paid him ſuch particular attention, without being gratified by it, and ſometimes ſhewing thoſe little marks of gallantry which all women expect.

The Count, though he had a more than common ſhare of ſolidity and ſtability, with the moſt refined underſtanding and integrity of heart, yet he was ſtill a Frenchman—ſtill poſſeſſed a natural gaiety of heart, the greateſt politeneſs and attention to the fair ſex, and ſometimes fell into the hyperbolical compliments ſo natural to his countrymen, when addreſſing the ladies. Mrs. Courtney, too ready to believe every thing to be as ſhe wiſhed, gave him every encouragement, and contrived frequently to draw him into ſituations and expreſſions which were rather equivocal,

vocal, but by which he meant nothing, though the lady thought otherwiſe.

They had been near three weeks at Scarborough; the ladies had heard twice from Matilda, but as ſhe requeſted her name might never be mentioned to the Count, but from neceſſity, they only anſwered his eager enquiries, by ſaying ſhe was well, and appeared to be much pleaſed with her ſituation. He ſaw there was a reſerve in their manner, and juſtly ſuppoſed it owing to her reſtrictions: he did juſtice to her greatneſs of mind, which only ſerved to increaſe his love and regrets.

One morning Mrs. Courtney, entering the Marchioneſs's dreſſing-room, flung herſelf into a chair, "Bleſs me! (ſaid ſhe) what ſhall I do with your friend, the Count? he has drawn me into a pretty ſcrape,—I never intended marrying again, but he is ſo preſſing, ſo irreſiſtible—" "Who, (cried the Marchioneſs, ſurpriſed) the Count? he preſſing?" "Why, yes, (anſwered ſhe;) ſurely

you muſt have obſerved his particular devoirs for ſome time paſt." "Not I, upon my honor (anſwered the Marchioneſs;) I never ſuppoſed his attentions to you wore the face of particularity." "Then you can have obſerved nothing, (ſaid ſhe, peeviſhly.) Pray, what think you, my dear madam?" (turning to the Counteſs.) "Upon my word, I am equally ſurpriſed (replied ſhe;) but if you can ſettle the matter agreeably between yourſelves, I ſhall certainly rejoice at it, becauſe I am very ſure Matilda will keep her reſolution, in refuſing his addreſſes."

Thoſe laſt words, which were ſpoken undeſignedly, piqued Mrs. Courtney a good deal. "I do not think 'tis of much conſequence, (ſaid ſhe, haughtily) whether ſhe keeps her reſolution or not;—I believe by this time he is very ſenſible of the impropriety of his offer——but I forget, I appointed him to meet me at a friend's, in the next ſtreet,—bon jour, ladies," (ſaid ſhe, with a forced gaiety, and ran

ran out of the room, leaving them looking at each other with aſtoniſhment.)

" Can this be Mrs. Courtney? (cried the Counteſs) my God, what a change!" " But is there, can there, be any truth, (ſaid the Marchioneſs) in the Count's attentions?" " Heaven knows, (ſaid ſhe) but if it is ſo, I ſhall never depend upon man again."

Some company coming in, prevented further converſation; but at dinner, when they all met, the ladies obſerved the Count appeared to be thoughtful and uneaſy, Mrs. Courtney gay and lively, Lord Delby rather attentive to both; in ſhort, it was the firſt dinner in which the party ſeemed collected within themſelves, and forgot their friends, except Mrs. Courtney, who behaved with remarkable politeneſs and ſweetneſs to all.

When the ladies retired to the drawing-room the Count addreſſed the Marquis in the following manner. " I believe, my dear

Sir, you are ſufficiently acquainted with me, to know that I am equally incapable of a diſhonourable thought or action to any one, much leſs towards a lady for whom I entertain the higheſt reſpect, and the ſiſter of my hoſpitable entertainer." "For heaven's ſake, (cried the Marquis) what is all this,—who dares accuſe you?" "A miſapprehenſion only, I hope, (ſaid the Count, in a calm tone) not an accuſation. Both you and all our friends are perfectly acquainted with my attachment to the amiable Matilda,—an attachment (added he, raiſing his voice) that will be as laſting as my life, for I never ſhall love any other woman: but unhappily the reſpect and attentions I have paid to the merits of Mrs. Courtney, have been miſconceived; I have been upbraided with ſeeking to gain her affections, and with having given colour to ſuppoſe mine were alſo devoted to her: the higheſt reſpect, nay, even admiration of her many amiable qualities, I have undoubtedly expreſſed, but not one word beyond what friendſhip would warrant, from a man who

made

made no ſcruple to own his love for another, though perhaps that other never can be his. My heart, my honor, does not reproach me with the leaſt duplicity or mean deſign. Can you, my dear Marquis, from the whole tenor of my conduct, ſuppoſe I could be a trifling coxcomb, much leſs a deliberate villain, for I muſt hold any man as ſuch who could ſeek to gain the affections of an amiable woman, to gratify his vanity only?" "I am equally ſurpriſed and concerned (ſaid the Marquis) that ſuch miſapprehenſions ſhould have taken place—" "And I (interrupted Lord Delby) equally diſpleaſed and mortified, at being made a party in the buſineſs; but there is no accounting for the vanity of women, and how very readily they entertain ideas they wiſh to indulge. I am very ſorry, Count, I have been drawn into this fooliſh affair, for I obſerved at firſt it was very unaccountable, that a man ſhould make his court to one woman, and avowedly profeſs his admiration of another; I ſhall however talk to my ſiſter, and I beg the ſubject may drop and go no further."

"I feel myſelf extremely at a loſs how to behave (ſaid the Count;) I think I had better leave Scarborough." "By no means, (ſaid his Lordſhip, haſtily;) behave as uſual to Mrs. Courtney, in public, but avoid tete-à-tetes;—if ſhe is wiſe, ſhe will herſelf approve this method, to eſcape obſervation."

The Count reluctantly ſubmitted, knowing after what had paſſed, he muſt appear very awkward in his civilities, which had been ſo miſconceived.

They attended the ladies in the drawing-room, and it being propoſed to go to the theatre, the Count, as uſual, offered his hand to Mrs. Courtney, though with a look of confuſion and reſerve; ſhe accepted it with a polite and tender air.

Lord Delby, not knowing ſhe had expoſed herſelf to the ladies, requeſted the Marquis would not mention the affair to them.

The

The evening paſt off very well, and at ſupper they were more cheerful and talkative than uſual. The following day however Mrs. Courtney appeared with a new face; ſhe looked penſive and unhappy, complained of a pain in her breaſt, eat little, ſighed frequently, and in ſhort, engaged that particular attention we naturally pay to thoſe we love, and ſee indiſpoſed. The Count looked the image of deſpair; he addreſſed her one moment, with an air of tenderneſs, the next he ſtudiouſly ſeemed to avoid her; his behaviour was unequal, confuſed, and evidently perplexed.

Things continued in this ſtate for ſome days, —Mrs. Courtney more melancholy, the Count more diſtreſſed; when one day, as they were at table, the Marquis received an expreſs from London. Every one was alarmed; it came from the German Ambaſſador, requeſting the Marquis would inſtantly come to town, the Count of Wolfenbach being there dangerouſly ill, and deſirous of making all poſſible reparation to the Counteſs.

This news ſuſpended all the new ſchemes. The Counteſs could ſcarcely be kept alive; ſhe was apprehenſive of ſome freſh plots, and dreaded the idea of being again within his power. "Fear not, madam, (cried Lord Delby;) the monſter ſhall never ſee you without your friends to protect you." "Beſides, ſiſter, (urged the Marchioneſs) the Ambaſſador is himſelf a pledge of your ſafety, and tells us he is dangerouſly ill,—perhaps the poor wretch cannot die in peace without your pardon." "O, my God! (ſaid ſhe, ſtarting up) let me go this inſtant!—alas! he has need of forgiveneſs; his crimes are great, yet if they were the conſequence of his love for me, 'tis my duty to ſpeak peace and pardon; grant heaven! (cried ſhe, lifting up her hands) I may not come too late! I will ſet off this very hour." "Be compoſed, my dear ſiſter, (ſaid the Marquis) we will go this evening; the Marchioneſs and I will attend you." "And I," (exclaimed the Count.) "We will all accompany you," (ſaid Lord Delby.) "Ah! my Lord, (anſwered the Coun-

Counteſs) why ſhould I ſo ſuddenly call you from the amuſements of this place: you propoſed ſtaying three months, we have only been here a little better than one." "Whereever my friends are, (replied Lord Delby) is to me the deſirable place; I have no local attachments without their preſence; and I dare anſwer for my ſiſter, ſhe has no objections, as I think the air of Scarborough has been of little uſe to her health." "You judge very right, my Lord, I ſhall certainly accompany our friends, (ſaid ſhe, in a languid tone, adding) their happineſs muſt conſtitute mine."

The Count, who took every thing literally which betrayed generoſity of ſentiment, could not help ſaying, "'Tis impoſſible to doubt Mrs. Courtney's concurrence in every ſcheme productive of pleaſure to thoſe ſhe honors with her eſteem." This compliment made her eyes dance with pleaſure.

Their women were called and deſired to ſet about packing immediately. Every thing was

was hurried on, and at five the next morning they were all on their return to London.

About a week previous to this Matilda received a letter from an unknown hand, and without a name, ſignifying that the Count De Bouville was paying his addreſſes to Mrs. Courtney; that he was extremely fond of her, but that ſhe heſitated on account of his vows to Matilda, which made him very unhappy.

She read this letter with compoſure,—ſhe felt ſome pangs at her heart,—ſhe tried to overcome them: "Why ſhould I be uneaſy, (ſaid ſhe) have not I wiſhed the Count might make a ſuitable alliance?—did I not releaſe him from his vows? Alas! I have neither claims nor expectations,—let him marry, I can then renounce the world, and ſettle here for life,—when loſt to him I have only this aſylum to bury myſelf in for ever." The tears would flow, but ſhe quickly dried them. "From whence this ſorrow, (ſaid ſhe again) had I any hopes? O, no! all is deſpair and bitter-

bitterneſs on my ſide, but I will rejoice in the happineſs of the amiable Count, whatever befalls myſelf.

Within three days after this, ſhe received a letter from Mrs. Courtney; theſe were the contents:

My dear Miſs Matilda,

" Honor, ſentiment, and generoſity impel me to addreſs you; I am well acquainted with the nobleneſs of your heart, and can confide in its integrity. You have refuſed the Count De Bouville, publicly refuſed him: was there a ſhadow of hope you ever could be his, I would have been ſilent; but as I deem that impoſſible, I truſt to your generoſity and fortitude, when I tell you, he has for ſome time paſt paid his addreſſes to me, with the warm approbation of all our friends. I at firſt made objections on your account; he pleaded, you had publicly rejected him; and, as I did not feel ſatisfied, he offered to write you, and procure

his releaſe: but knowing men have great duplicity, when they wiſh to carry a point, I declined his offer and choſe to write myſelf; and I conjure you, my dear Matilda, to believe I will not conſent to what he calls his happineſs, without your permiſſion. If you have any hopes or expectations; if you think his love may ever return to you, and that different ſituations may give a countenance to his addreſſes, and admit of your claims upon him, depend upon it I will diſmiſs him, however unhappy he may be; for I would not wound your peace, by acceding to his wiſhes, be the conſequence what it may. Your friends, who are mine alſo, chooſe to be entirely ſilent on the ſubject; nor will they take notice of it, until ſettled between you and me. Look on me as your friend, dear Matilda,—be explicit,—do not conſider the Count or myſelf; ſpeak your wiſhes, your hopes, and be aſſured that your felicity is my firſt wiſh, whatever it may coſt me.

I am my dear Matilda's ſincere friend
And obedient ſervant,
MARIA COURTNEY."

Prepared as Matilda had been, by the anonymous letter, to expect ſuch intelligence, no words can expreſs her feelings at receiving this letter; overcome with grief, ſhe retired to her apartment and gave looſe to the painful emotions that oppreſſed her. After a little time ſhe grew more compoſed: "Is a heart like his worth regreting? (cried ſhe.) Could he, if his love had been founded on eſteem, ſo ſoon have offered his addreſſes to another? O, no! it was only a tranſient affection, not imprinted on the heart, but vaniſhed with my perſon: how fortunate then our hands were not joined; how miſerable ſhould I have found myſelf, if united for life to ſo fickle a diſpoſition."

Whilſt this impreſſion was ſtrong upon her, ſhe took up her pen and wrote the following anſwer.

"*Dear madam,*

"Accept, I beſeech you, my warmeſt acknowledgements for your very friendly and obliging letter: your candid communications and

and conſideration for my peace, I feel in the moſt ſenſible manner; but I beg leave to aſſure you, madam, neither my happineſs nor peace depend now upon the Count De Bouville. I ſhall always think myſelf obliged for the affection he offered me, but as it is impoſſible we ſhould ever meet on thoſe terms, I hope reaſon has entirely ſubdued an improper ſentiment, and if we ever ſhould meet again, which is not likely, we ſhall behold each other with the indifference of common acquaintances. I am exceedingly happy here, and, if at the expiration of the twelvemonth Mr. Weimar allowed me, my friends will accede to my wiſhes, and permit my ſtay in this convent, I truſt I ſhall be happy for the remainder of my life.

" I hope this will prove ſatisfactory to your very friendly offers reſpecting the Count, who has my ſincereſt wiſhes for his happineſs, with any other woman but her who is, my dear madam,

Your much obliged humble ſervant,

MATILDA."

After ſhe had ſealed and ſent off this letter her ſpirits grew more tranquilliſed; ſhe tried to conquer her feelings, and conſider only the ficklenеſs of men's diſpoſitions. "Yet why ſhould I upbraid him, thought ſhe; he has a family, a name to ſupport, and ought to marry: Mrs. Courtney is amiable, has a large independent fortune, reſpectable friends, and a noble origin to boaſt of;—what am I in a comparative view with her? Ah! (cried ſhe, burſting into tears) the retroſpection humbles and ſubdues both my pride and regret: what have I to do but to ſubmit to the lowly ſtate I am placed in, and bleſs at a diſtance thoſe generous ſpirits that have enabled me to procure ſuch an aſylum as this."

Mother Magdalene entered as ſhe was wiping the tears from her cheeks; taking her hand affectionately between hers, "My dear young lady, why thoſe tears? ſpare me the pain of ſeeing you unhappy; remember this is but a ſhort and tranſitory life; our pilgrimage through it is painful, no doubt: thorns

thorns are ſtrewed in our paths, ſorrows planted in our boſoms; but if planted and ſtrewed by others, where is the ſting to afflict our own hearts? Believe me, dear lady, reaſon can ſubdue every affliction but what ariſes from a condemnation within; with a ſelf-approving conſcience, we can look forward with hope; and if turbulent and ungracious ſpirits are too powerful for us to contend with here, we can truſt to our Heavenly Father, that our ſufferings and patience will meet with a recompence hereafter, far ſuperior to the brighteſt expectations that can be formed in this life." "My dear friend and comforter, (ſaid Matilda, kiſſing her hand) be you my monitreſs if I grieve for temporal evils; yet, alas! my misfortunes are not common ones." "You think ſo (anſwered Mother Magdalene;) we are all apt to magnify our own troubles, and think them ſuperior to what others feel; but, my dear child, you are yet a novice in affliction; when you know more of the world you will know alſo that there are varieties of miſery which aſſail the human frame,—and

'tis

'tis our own feelings that conſtitute great part of our diſtreſs."

Matilda ſighed, and after a little pauſe, "That I may not appear impatient, nor grieved at trifles, I will unboſom myſelf to you, and perhaps from you obtain that conſolation I have hitherto ſought in vain."

She then related every part of her ſtory, except the name of the Counteſs and ſituation of the Caſtle.

Her gentle friend ſympathized with her, and confeſſed, for ſo young a woman, her trials were very great. "But ſtill, my dear lady, (ſaid ſhe) I bid you hope; you have a Father and Protector, truſt in him, and you will one day aſſuredly be happy. Another time you ſhall know my ſad ſtory, and will then confeſs, of the two, I have been moſt wretched; and, though I cannot entirely exclude a painful remembrance ſometimes, yet I am now comparatively happy,—my troubles

troubles no longer exiſt, and religion has reſtored peace to my mind. Adieu, my dear child,—take hope to your boſom and compoſe your ſpirits." "Yes, (cried Matilda) I will at leaſt try to conquer one cauſe of my diſtreſs, and in deſtroying this fatal letter of Mrs. Courtney's, loſe all remembrance of the Count: ſurely after having ſo ſolemnly renounced him, I have no right either to complain of him or grieve for myſelf,—'tis an unpardonable folly, for every way he is dead to me. She threw the letter into the fire and walked into the garden.

In the evening ſhe received another viſit from her good mother, who was much pleaſed to ſee her ſo tranquil. Matilda reminded her of her promiſe to relate her hiſtory.

"My ſtory, my dear child, is not a long one, but replete with many melancholy circumſtances. My father was a merchant at Dunkirk; he married a very amiable woman, and had a numerous family—five girls and four

four boys; few people lived more reſpectable than they did, but they were not rich; a large family, liberal minds, and hearts always diſpoſed to relieve the wants of others, precluded affluence, though they had a decent competence. The failure of a very capital houſe in England, with whom my father was materially connected, obliged him to go over, without loſs of time; he embarked from Dunkirk. Alas! my dear child, we ſaw him no more! a ſtorm overtook them, as 'tis ſuppoſed, and all on board periſhed, for the packet was never but once ſeen or heard of after. When this dreadful news arrived, my mother was weeping over a letter juſt received from a friend in London, with the intelligence, that the houſe which had failed could not pay a ſhilling in the pound, and from ſome particular connexions between them and my father, all his effects would be ſeized, and he was likewiſe declared, or included in the bankruptcy. One of thoſe unhappy goſſiping perſons, fond of telling every thing, without conſidering the conſequences, called upon my mother,

mother, as ſhe was in an agony over the contents of this letter; "Ah! my dear madam, (cried ſhe) I ſee you have received the fatal news?" "Yes, (anſwered my mother, wringing her hands) we are all undone for ever!" "But who, (ſaid ſhe again) could write you about it, for only the boat that is juſt come in ſaw the packet go down." "What packet?" (cried my mother, ſtarting." "Why the packet your good huſband was in."

"She heard no more, but fell ſenſeleſs on the floor. I had been out upon buſineſs, and entered the room juſt as this officious newſmonger and the ſervants were trying to raiſe and recover my wretched parent. A ſtranger to all the circumſtances, I was frightened to death almoſt, and teaſed every one to know what had happened; no one anſwered. It was ſome time before ſhe was brought to life. With a look of horror I ſhall never forget, ſhe cried, "Hermine, you have no longer a father, a friend, nor a home!" "Great God!

God! (I exclaimed) what is all this?" "'Tis miſery in extreme," ſaid ſhe, ſtill with a fixed look and a dry eye;) your father is drowned, and I hourly expect every thing to be ſeized. Well, (cried ſhe, rather wildly) let it be complete! ruin ſhould not come by degrees." Two or three of the younger children came into the room; the moment ſhe ſaw them ſhe gave a violent ſhriek and fell into convulſions. Scarce in my ſenſes, I flew about the houſe, and by my ſcreams drew ſeveral perſons to me. We got my mother up to her apartment, a phyſician was ſent for, but it was many hours before ſhe was reſtored; ſhe lay three days at the point of death, the fourth the fever abated, and hopes were entertained of her life. This day a perſon came and took poſſeſſion of the houſe and all our effects. By the interpoſition of a friend we were allowed to remain in it ten days. Judge, my dear young friend, what muſt have been my ſituation; a father dead, a mother ſcarcely alive, our whole property ſeized,—eight children younger than myſelf, I only

fifteen, and all unprovided for—obliged to be the comforter, the ſupporter of all.

Out of the numerous ſet of acquaintances we had, two only appeared as friends in our diſtreſs; one an old gentleman of ſmall fortune, the other a young merchant, who had for ſome months paid particular attention to me, young as I was. Theſe two perſons intereſted themſelves a good deal for us. My mother grew better, but her nerves were ſo ſhattered, that a kind of partial palſy took effect upon her ſpeech, ſhe ſpoke thick and ſcarcely intelligible; a ſort of convulſive cry ſucceeded every attempt to talk; in ſhort, her ſituation was moſt truly deplorable. Within a few days we were removed to the houſe of the old gentleman, without any one thing we could call our own, but clothes. This good and worthy man placed out my ſiſters in a convent, put my brothers to ſchool, raiſed a ſubſcription for their ſupport, his own fortune being inſufficient to maintain us all, and in fine, did every thing a father and

and friend could do, for the whole family. Not one of my mother's former gay acquaintance ever concerned themſelves about her; ſhe was poor and afflicted with ſickneſs, "they could not bear to ſee a woman they eſteemed in ſo miſerable a ſituation, and therefore were obliged to give her up." Oh! my dear lady, of all the worldly evils that can befal us, ſurely there is nothing ſo painful to ſupport as the ingratitude and contumely of thoſe who once thought themſelves honoured in your acquaintance: meer butterflies of the day! they baſk in the ſunſhine of your proſperity, but when night ſhuts in, and ſorrows aſſail you, they fly elſewhere, in ſearch of thoſe ſweets you can no longer afford them, and deſpiſe what they once coveted and admired. Young, at that time, almoſt a ſtranger to mankind, I felt indignation and aſtoniſhment when I met any of our former friends—friends! let me not profane the name of friendſhip! I mean intimates and companions; my civilities were repreſſed with ſcorn; my appearance glanced over with a look of contempt,

and " poor ſouls, they are ſupported by charity, I pity them to my heart," ſaid aloud in my hearing, with features expreſſive of every thing but pity.

" I will not dwell on things ſo common as ingratitude and hardneſs of heart; ſtings which you, my young friend, have never yet experienced,—heaven grant you never may, for 'tis a bitter cup to taſte of. We lived in the manner I have deſcribed for near eight months, my poor mother ſo ill and helpleſs I could not leave her. The young gentleman I have mentioned payed me the ſame attention, and ſcrupled not to acquaint our good friend, it was his deſign, in a ſhort time, to make me his wife. " If you do, (ſaid he, one day) you ſhall have a father's bleſſing with her when I die; whilſt I live I will ſupport the children: but Hermine is a good girl—ſhe who can, at her time of life, give herſelf up to the care of a ſick parent, and find delight in her duty, will make a good wife."

" One

" One morning, when the old gentleman was in my mother's room, he was ſuddenly ſeized with an apoplexy, and dropt ſenſeleſs from his chair: my ſcreams ſoon brought aſſiſtance—a ſurgeon was ſent for;—alas! he was gone for ever. My mother was, in conſequence of her fright, taken in a ſhivering fit, which in a few moments turned to a ſtroke of the palſy, and deprived her entirely of ſpeech and the uſe of her limbs on the left ſide. That I preſerved my ſenſes at ſuch a time, was wonderful. I ſent for my lover, in an agony no words can deſcribe; the news flew through the town, and two or three of our late friend's relations haſtened to the houſe; they were rich and wanted nothing, however they began to aſſume an air of authority, when my lover interfered, told them he was convinced there was a will, and that I was the appointed heir. This enraged them greatly; the will was eagerly called for, and by all parties earneſtly ſought for: alas! no ſuch thing was to be found. The unfeeling women ordered me to remove my mother and

my trumpery the following morning. My lover was almoſt beſide himſelf with vexation and diſappointment: I was ſtupid with ſorrow; I hung over my almoſt lifeleſs parent, without ſpeaking, and unable to ſhed a tear. After ſome time, thoſe women quitted the room, leaving orders with a woman ſervant, to watch me, that I took nothing but my own, and to take care I quitted their houſe next day. When they were gone, this poor woman in circumſtances, but rich (oh! how much richer than her employers!) in goodneſs of heart, approached the bed, and, gently raiſing me, ſhe gave me ſome drops and water that rouzed me from the ſtupor which had ſeized upon my faculties, when, looking round the room for my departed friend, and then on my helpleſs parent, I burſt into a flood of tears. "Thank God! (ſaid the good creature) that you can weep: don't be unhappy, my dear Miſs, Providence will provide for you: I have a ſiſter, who lives in a very humble ſtyle indeed, and keeps a little ſhop; her huſband was formerly an under clerk to your

your father; he loves the whole family dearly, and I dare ſay, if you will condeſcend to ſtay under their mean roof 'till you are better ſuited, they will wait upon you with joy." "Ah! where is Mr.——?" meaning my lover. "I know not, madam, (anſwered ſhe) but I think he followed the ladies." "Good heavens! (I cried) could he leave me under ſuch a complication of horrid circumſtances; this is bitterneſs indeed, if deſerted by him,—but it cannot be,—he is doubtleſs gone to fetch a phyſician." In this vain hope I paſſed ſeveral hours, no lover, no phyſician appeared; I was in a ſtate of diſtraction: the ſervant ſent for her ſiſter and brother; they came, and offered me their ſervices with a heartineſs which ſpoke their ſincerity. I was incapable of determining; I ſent to my lover, "he was particularly engaged, but would ſee me ſome time to-morrow." "O, let me begone! (cried I, in a frenzy) I will take my dear mother in my arms—we will die together." With difficulty they ſeparated me from her: the dear ſaint

was ſenſible, though incapable of ſpeaking; her eyes told me all ſhe felt—O! the expreſſion in them can never be forgotten,—what a night was that! In the morning my dear mother was put into a kind of litter, and we were conveyed to the humble dwelling of this charitable pair. She was laid in a decent bed and dropt a ſleep: I was kneeling at the ſide of it when the door opened, and the man who called himſelf my lover appeared before me. I felt undeſcribeable emotions; he took my hand, and placing me in a chair, ſtill unable to ſpeak, he ſaid, "I came to you, my love, the firſt moment of leiſure; laſt night I was engaged; but you ſhall not ſtay in this poor place, I will take a decent lodging for you and your mother, and will be anſwerable for all expences; I will daily be your viſitor, and I hope in a little time you will recover your ſpirits." At firſt my heart bounded with joy at his kindneſs; then again I thought there was a ſomething wrong, though I hardly knew what; at laſt, "I think, (replied I) that I ought not to put you

you to ſuch great expences, nor would it be proper you ſhould maintain me, unleſs—" There I ſtopt. " Unleſs what?" (ſaid he, earneſtly.) " Unleſs I had a claim to your protection," (ſaid I, bluſhing.) " I will be very ſincere with you, my dear Hermine: had your old friend performed his promiſe, and left you his fortune, though but a ſmall one, I would have married you; but I am young, and only entering into life; a wife without a fortune, a mother in ſuch a ſituation, and a family of young relations, would ſoon ruin me, and of courſe you: I muſt prove my love another way; an old rich widow has been recommended to me; I will marry her; I ſhall then be enabled to ſupport you all in affluence, and have no ill conſequences to dread. What ſay you, my deareſt Hermine, may I hope your ſentiments concur with mine?" You will wonder, my dear child, at my patience and ſilence during this propoſal; in truth I wondered at myſelf; heaven, no doubt, ſupported me, and gave me, at that trying moment, ſuperior reſolution. " Of

my opinion, Sir, and of the ſentiments you have avowed, you muſt collect my thoughts, when I tell you, that ſo far from living a life of obligation with ſuch a man, were you this moment poſſeſſed of millions, and would offer to marry me, I would prefer poverty and want—I would ſtarve, with this dear inſulted woman, before I could condeſcend to marry a man of ſuch infamous principles!—Leave me, Sir, for ever; preſume not to enter the habitation of virtuous poverty, and bluſh at your own littleneſs, when you enjoy the houſe of wealth and magnificence." He attempted to ſpeak. "I hear you no longer, Sir; you are more mean and contemptible in my eyes than the pooreſt reptile that crawls upon the earth." I ſtampt with my foot, and Mrs. Bouté came up. I never ſaw a countenance ſo expreſſive of wonder and diſappointment when ſhe entered. "I am ſorry to ſay, madam, you do not know your beſt friends; but ſhould your mind alter upon conſideration, you know where to find me, and I ſhall be always happy to attend your commands." I gave him

no

no anſwer, but a look of contempt, and he left the room.

" The ſpirit and indignation which had ſupported me through this ſcene, now ſubſided; I ſhed a flood of tears. I ſaw no one being to whom I could look up with any hope or proſpect of comfort. Mrs. Bouté, who ſympathized with me, ſaid, " Ah! madam, if Madame De Raikfort, if Madame De Creponiere were acquainted with your ſorrows, I am ſure you would find friends; they always aſſiſt the unfortunate, and particularly perſons like you, born to higher expectations." I took my reſolution immediately; I wrote to both, deſcribing my paſt and preſent ſituation. From the latter lady I received an almoſt immediate viſit: ſhe condoled with me; ſhe entered into my concerns with a kindneſs and delicacy peculiar to herſelf, as I then thought; I knew not that the principles of charity and benevolence were the ſame in every well informed mind and good heart. I received the ſame kind attentions from the

other family: Madame De Raikfort ſent me every comfort and convenience I could want for my poor mother. In ſhort, to thoſe good ladies I was indebted for my chief ſupport during her exiſtence. A fortnight, exactly, from the death of our good old friend, ſhe expired. There was no apparent alteration till within a few hours of her death; and ſhe went off without a ſigh or groan. Though the ſhock was dreadful, yet I had ſo long expected it, and in her melancholy ſituation it was rather to be wiſhed for, that I found myſelf, though grieved at my irreparable loſs, yet rejoiced that ſhe eſcaped from the evils of this life, to awake in a bleſſed immortality. The benevolent ladies I have mentioned, did not forſake me; they paid the laſt ſad duties to my parent; they undertook to educate and place my younger brothers and ſiſters to get their living decently; they aſked what were my views and wiſhes? I frankly anſwered, "To be a nun." Had I any choice of a convent? I named this; a young lady, a friend of my juvenile days, previous to my mis-

misfortunes, had profeſſed here. The ladies told me I ſhould enter upon my noviciate, but on no terms to be perſuaded to aſſume the veil; it was by no means their wiſh; and the firſt ſummons from me they would take me out and provide for me in the world: that they rather complied with my wiſhes than their own inclinations—which would be more gratified in my reſidence with them. I thanked my generous benefactreſſes, but perſiſted in my deſire of quitting the world. The day before I intended leaving Dunkirk, I received a letter from my quondam lover, expreſſing regret for his behaviour, and an unequivocal offer of marriage. I put his letter under a cover, with theſe lines: "The man who preſumes to inſult the feelings of a virtuous female, and when he fails in his purpoſe, condeſcends to ſolicit pardon, and offers to raiſe that ill-treated woman to a level with himſelf, lowers her more, by ſuch an offer, than the bittereſt poverty can inflict: but the perſon to whom this letter is addreſſed is fortunately beyond the reach of inſult or indigence;

ſhe

ſhe therefore rejects the propoſal with her whole heart, and with the higheſt contempt."

"Having ſeen my brothers and ſiſters ſafe under the protection of thoſe worthy ladies, and received from them every pecuniary aſſiſtance I could want, with letters of warm recommendation I arrived here; and here, in a ſhort time, recovered tranquillity and eaſe: leaving nothing in the world to regret, I ſtudied the duties of my ſituation, and, at the expiration of the time allowed to conſider, I gave my decided choice of a monaſtic life, and took the veil. I hear often from my generous friends. Two of my ſiſters are well married; the reſt of my family have every proſpect of ſucceſs.

"Now, my dear young lady, I have related my hiſtory, tell me candidly, have your troubles ever equalled mine?"

"Oh! no, (cried Matilda;) I am aſhamed of my own impatience and inquietude. Good heavens!

heavens! if ſuch are the evils to be expected in life; if misfortunes are ſo frequent, ingratitude and malignancy ſo prevalent, men ſo abandoned, and the good and benevolent alloted ſo ſmall a ſhare in the proportion of the world, the only aſylum for the unfortunate is a convent." "Not always (anſwered Mother Magdalene;) there are ſituations and difficulties in life, from which even the unfortunate may extract hope and comfort: your's is ſuch: 'tis poſſible you have parents ſtill living, who may one day fold you to their boſoms; 'tis likewiſe not impoſſible you may one day be united to the man you prefer. In ſhort, your ſituation is not hopeleſs, like mine: I ſaw the downfall of every expectation I could form, and had no one hope or engagement to the world; you have many: you have no right to diſpoſe of your future deſtiny, whilſt there is the leaſt probable chance you may be reclaimed. Reſide here as a boarder, my dear child; but under your doubtful circumſtances, never take the veil, for the mind ſhould be entirely diſengaged from

from all worldly hopes, before it can renounce it properly."

From this day Matilda grew entirely reſigned; ſhe derived wiſdom and comfort from her good mother's converſation, nor ſuffered anticipation of evils to diſturb her ſerenity.

The Scarborough party were now arrived in London. The Marquis immediately waited on the Ambaſſador. His Excellency told him the Count Wolfenbach was alive, but paſt all hopes of recovery. He knows you are hourly expected, and is anxious to ſee you.

The Marquis, taking his addreſs in Doverſtreet, haſtened thither, and ſent up his name. He waited ſome time for the ſervant's return, at length he was deſired to walk up, and on entering the room, ſcarce could he trace any recollection of the object in the bed before him. It was ſome years ſince he had ſeen the Count; he was not then young; but age,

anxiety

anxiety and conſcious guilt, with the diſorder that now oppreſſed him, had indeed greatly altered him. When the Marquis drew near, he was for a moment ſilent; then, addreſſing him, "I am told, my Lord, you requeſted my preſence." "I did (replied the Count.) Pray, is your ſiſter with you?" "Not in the houſe (anſwered the Marquis) but ſhe is in town, and will ſoon attend, if it is your wiſh to ſee her." "Yes, (ſaid the Count) let her come; I can tell my ſtory but once, 'tis fit ſhe ſhould be preſent."

The Marquis inſtantly diſpatched a meſſenger for his wife and ſiſter. In the interim the Count deſired to be informed in what manner the Counteſs effected her eſcape through the wood and got to England. The Marquis recounted every particular. "There was a fate in it, no doubt (ſaid the Count;) Providence intervened, to prevent me from the commiſſion of the crime I intended, and preſerved her life."

Word

Word was brought up that the Counteſs and Marchioneſs were below. They were deſired to enter. When they came into the room the Counteſs involuntarily ſhrunk back. "Approach, madam, do not fear; the diſcovery is now made, and in a very ſhort time I ſhall have nothing to hope for, nor you any thing to dread." The Counteſs advanced, trembling, and ſeated herſelf by the bed. "I now (ſaid he) entreat your forgiveneſs of all the wrongs my cruel jealouſy heaped upon you; ſay, ſpeak, can you pardon me? tell me that, before I begin my narrative, leſt I ſhould be cut off e'er I have finiſhed." "I do indeed (replied the Counteſs;) I pardon you from my ſoul, and may the God of mercy pardon you likewiſe." "I am ſatisfied, (ſaid he) and now attend to my confeſſions.——I was well aware, before I married, of the affection ſubſiſting between Victoria and the Chevalier; I was not blind to the difference in our perſons and ages, and hated him in proportion to the advantages in his favor. I was reſolved to carry my point, to gratify both paſſions; her father

father ſeconded my wiſhes, and ſhe became mine. From that hour I never knew a peaceful moment. I doated on her to diſtraction; jealouſy kept pace with love. Her conduct gave me no right to complain; yet ſhe loved me not, and I feared the Chevalier was the object of her partiality and regret. My temper, naturally impetuous and furious, grew daily worſe; for what hell can give torments equal to what a jealous man feels? One day I had been at Vienna, and was informed of the Chevalier's return: deſperate and alarmed, I came home. In the Park I met Peter. He had lived ſome years with me; was blindly devoted to my ſervice, and had been employed by me to watch the Counteſs. He told me a gentleman had been walking round the park, examining the houſe, and on his going to him, and enquiring who he wanted, he only aſked if the Count and Counteſs of Wolfenbach were there; and Peter anſwering, yes, he walked haſtily away. This information was a dagger to my ſoul: I reſolved to carry her to my caſtle in Switzerland, ſecretly.

cretly. I purſued my deſign. I had been there but a ſhort time before I heard a man, diſguiſed, had been about the grounds, who made off when any perſon came near him; I concluded 'twas the Chevalier, and reſolved to have him watched, determined he ſhould die; at the ſame time that I thought it impoſſible he ſhould come at the Counteſs in her apartment. One day going to her room, I heard a ſudden noiſe, found her on the floor, with a paper in her hand, and ſaw a figure glance from the window. I was ſtruck with rage and aſtoniſhment. After confining and upbraiding her, as ſhe may inform you, I cloſeted Peter, and by promiſes of preſent reward and future proſpects, he took a ſolemn oath to aſſiſt in my revenge, and to be ſecret. We took our ſtand the following night by the wall, and ſaw him advance to climb up the battlements; we ſallied out, knocked him down, bound and gagged him, and, determined to have complete revenge, we dragged him to the Counteſs's apartment." "Spare the repetition of what paſſed there (cried ſhe;) it

was

was a ſcene of horror; repeat only what were your tranſactions out of my ſight." "You ſhall be obeyed (anſwered he.) It was in vain ſhe proteſted innocence, I gave no credit. My firſt intention was to murder both; and when I locked her in the cloſet with the dead body, I hoped terror and fright would have done my buſineſs. In the morning we heard her groans; we entered; the ſight of her agonies for a moment diſarmed my rage, and I conſented Margarite ſhould aſſiſt her. After ſhe was delivered, and the curtains faſtened, Peter and myſelf took the body and carried it to one end of the ſubterraneous paſſage, dug a hole in the earth, on one ſide, and threw it in. I now grew irreſolute with reſpect to my wife's death; my revenge cooled, but I knew it was impoſſible but ſhe muſt hate and deteſt me. One day I went to her, uncertain whether to deſtroy her and the child or not, to prevent a diſcovery. She knows what followed. I felt a thouſand ſoft emotions at the ſight of the child, and both loved and hated her to madneſs. I reſolved at laſt

to

to confine her for life, and to preſerve the child. Joſeph, the under gardener, the only man who lived in the caſtle, I was obliged to confide in. I told him my wife had been detected in an intrigue, and I had intended to murder her, but ſhe recovered of her wounds, and now I ſhould only confine her for life. I ſwore him to ſecreſy, and vowed, if ever he betrayed her place of reſidence, or life, to any one, I would murder both. The poor fellow ſwore faithfully to obey me. The reſt ſhe can inform you."

" But my child! my child!" (cried the Counteſs, eagerly.) " Is alive, and an officer now in the Emperor's ſervice." " Great God! I thank thee! (ſaid ſhe, falling on her knees;) and in this poſture, when I return thanks to my Heavenly Father, for his preſervation, I alſo forgive and bleſs you, for the care of my child; may every evil deed be forgiven, and may you enjoy peace in your laſt moments, and everlaſting happineſs hereafter!"

The

The hard heart of the Count was ſoftened into tears by the warmth of her expreſſions: he held out his hand; ſhe kiſſed it, in token of peace. "May your prayers be heard (ſaid he;) but I have more vices yet to confeſs. I took the child to Vienna, brought it up, as the ſon of a friend, very privately. At a certain age he was placed in the military ſchool, and about ſix months ago I procured for him a commiſſion. But to return. Once in two years I generally viſited the Caſtle. Her reſignation and obedience to my orders ſometimes moved me in her favor, and every viſit my heart grew more and more ſoftened; yet I dared not liberate her, her death had been ſo univerſally believed for many years; how could I account for my conduct, or her appearance, without incurring ſuſpicions againſt myſelf? Diſtracted in my mind, I neither enjoyed peace nor reſt;—alas! there is neither for the wicked, however we may diſguiſe our crimes to the world—however we meet with reſpect and approbation from mankind, the man conſcious of his wickedneſs, with

with doubt and terror gnawing at his heart, is the moſt miſerable of human beings: we may ſwear to ſecreſy, we may ſilence every thing but conſcience—there is the ſting that for ever wounds—there the monitor no bribes can ſuppreſs. Life became a burthen to me, yet I feared to die; I feared daily a diſcovery of my crimes; I reſolved to forbear my viſits, but to ſend Peter every ſix months, to gain intelligence and ſee all was ſafe. On his return from his laſt errand of that kind he informed me, that, calling at a woodcutter's cottage, near the Caſtle, who knew him not, from a curioſity to hear if they were acquainted with Joſeph (of whoſe fidelity he was always doubtful) the woman told him a ſtory of a young lady's coming there, being recommended to the Caſtle; and that ſhe had ſo much courage as to go to the haunted rooms, (for I had taken care to have it ſuppoſed that wing was haunted) and that very day was there ſeveral hours. Alarmed at this intelligence, Peter flew to me, then on a viſit about ſeven leagues from the Caſtle, frightened out

of his ſenſes. After a little conſultation we reſolved to go in the night, break open the doors, if locked, and murder both Victoria and Margarite, and after that fall upon ſome method to ſilence the young lady and Joſeph in the ſame manner. We ſucceeded in our attempt: we diſpatched Margarite, and came down to do the ſame by her miſtreſs, but Providence, who counteracts the deſigns of wicked men, and turns thoſe very meaſures we take to ſecure ourſelves to our deſtruction, ſuggeſted to me to take her into the wood and deſtroy her, that Joſeph, if he came in the morning, might think it was a gang of banditti who had carried them off; for which reaſon, I thought my being concerned would never be ſuſpected. This fooliſh concerted ſcheme we purſued; the Counteſs remembers I was thrown from my horſe, and ſhe took that opportunity to eſcape. When I recovered my ſenſes I found I had ſome bruiſes on my head and ſhoulder. I looked round, "Where, where is the Counteſs?" "Ah! (cried Peter) I fear we are undone; the horſe

flew away with her as I alighted, and your horſe alſo run off." "Villain! (I cried) find her this moment, or I will murder you." "'Tis impoſſible to purſue her on foot; 'tis moſt likely ſhe may be daſhed to pieces in the wood; mean time, Sir, creep, if poſſible, to the town, have ſome aſſiſtance; I will borrow another horſe and make all poſſible ſearch." I had no alternative; diſtracted with pain and horror, I got with difficulty to the town, and was put to bed very ill. Peter rode off immediately; he was wanting a day and a night: I ſuffered a thouſand tortures: I began to think he had betrayed me. 'Tis the curſe attendent on villains always to be ſuſpicious of each other: for what vows or ties can bind a man you know would commit the moſt atrocious crimes for money. In my conjectures, however, I wronged Peter; he returned. He had ſearched the wood, and every part of the adjacent neighbourhood, without gaining any intelligence, but that two or three perſons had ſeen a horſe ſaddled, galloping furiouſly in the wood: he had called

at

at the cottage—nothing had tranſpired there. In ſhort, we began to hope, as our only ſecurity, that ſhe was killed ſome where in the road, and the body carried away by paſſengers. In a few days I got well, determined to viſit the Caſtle, and either deſtroy Joſeph, or decoy him away to ſome remote place. In ſhort, my ſchemes were ſo many and unſettled by fear that I fixed on no poſitive plan. We arrived at the Caſtle; we ſaw no appearance of any lady; but Peter, taking an opportunity to ſpeak to Bertha, was informed there had been a lady, but ſhe had left them three or four days. This was another ſtroke: the lady, we knew, had ſeen the Counteſs; ſhe might betray the ſecret, where could ſhe be gone, or who was ſhe? Peter enquired again, Bertha knew only that ſhe talked of going to Paris. We were now diſtracted; the ſword ſeemed ſuſpended over our heads, and we every moment feared detection. That night we met in the Counteſs's apartments, and ſearched thoroughly; in a drawer we found a purſe with ſome money, and a paper ſigned

Matilda, giving an account of ſundry articles taken from the drawers. This convinced us we had reaſons for our apprehenſions: the death of Joſeph would rid us of one witneſs—I ſecretly determined to deſtroy another. We went to the town the following morning—I procured from the different medical perſons ſome laudanum. We agreed the beſt way would be to get Joſeph and his wife to my other caſtle, and deſtroy them there, where they were unknown. I deceived Peter by this fooliſh ſcheme, having taken a different reſolution. I told him we would return that night to the Caſtle, take the remaining valuables, money, &c. which ſhould all be his, previous to our departure. He joyfully conſented. I took an opportunity to give him the opium in the evening; by the time we got to the apartment he grew very heavy, and during his ſearch among the drawers, dropt down in a heavy ſleep; I put him upon the bed, faſtened every window and door, ſet fire to the curtains and counterpane, and went out, locking the door after me; I then haſtily proceeded

proceeded to the wood houſe which joined Joſeph's kitcken, and ſoon had that in a blaze; bringing ſome dry ſtubble, I lighted it againſt the door and window ſhutters, and ſeeing the whole take fire in both wings, I went to the ſtable, took my own horſe, which was there faſtened up, ready ſaddled, as we left them, and riding off to the town, went to the inn I had been ill at, and waited patiently for news. Within a few hours I was called up: my Caſtle was diſcovered by ſome wood-cutters to be in flames, and before aſſiſtance could be procured was entirely deſtroyed. I pretended great vexation and diſtreſs; rode to the ſpot; it was a dreadful ſight; my ſoul ſhuddered—I was in agony. The people imputed it to a different cauſe. I aſked, had nobody ſeen Joſeph nor his wife. No, was the general anſwer, and the fire imputed to their careleſneſs. Some of the neighbouring gentlemen rode over; every one condoled with me, and offered me accommodations; I returned with the gentleman to whom I had firſt been on a viſit. When retired to my

apartment, a retroſpection of all my crimes forced themſelves on my remembrance. I tried to ſleep, alas! there was no ſleep befriended me; ten thouſand horrid images ſwam before my ſight; I threw myſelf out of bed; it was moonlight; my room commanded a view of the diſtant wood, I ſhrunk at the ſight—there lies my wretched wife! then the Chevalier, Joſeph, Bertha and Peter, all ſeemed to walk before me;—great God! what were my ſufferings that night, never to be effaced from my memory. When daylight came, I went down ſtairs to the garden; here I firſt thought of deſtroying myſelf—my boy ſhot acroſs my mind—I took my reſolution at once. I ſat off that day for Vienna. On my arrival I ſent for Frederic, and after ſome preparation acknowledged him as my ſon, acquainted him his mother died in childbed, and I had particular reaſons, immaterial to him, for not owing him ſooner; I made my will, ſecured my whole fortune to him, by proper teſtimonials, that I acknowledged him my ſon, and then reſolved to retire from the

world

world, repent of my ſins, and try to make my peace with heaven. All Vienna was aſtoniſhed at my reſolution; my ſon ſought every argument to divert me from my purpoſe,—his tenderneſs, goodneſs and virtue were daggers to my heart; I fell very ill, and earneſtly prayed for the hour of death; heaven thought fit to ſpare me, that I might receive ſome comfort before the fatal hour arrived. I began to get better, though weak and declining, when, to my inexpreſſible ſurpriſe, I received a letter from our Miniſter in England, with a brief account of the Counteſs, the depoſition of the Marquis, and requeſting I would acknowledge the lady, and not permit ſuch black tranſactions to appear before the public as the Counteſs ſaid ſhe had the power of diſcloſing. At firſt I thought this letter was all illuſion; but when I conſidered the poſſibility of her eſcape from death, and the application of the Marquis to the Ambaſſador, I was convinced the whole was founded on truth. What a mountain was taken from my boſom! I wrote immediately, I would follow the letter.

In three days my ſtrength mended greatly, yet I was obliged to take very eaſy journies, and by the time I arrived in England fatigue had quite exhauſted me. His Excellency ſent off an expreſs to you. I now thank heaven that both you and Joſeph are alive, and adore the ways of Providence, who extracts good out of evil, and made the very crimes I intended to perpetrate the means of deliverance to you both. The death of the unfortunate Chevalier I bitterly repent, and can only obſerve here, that when a man gives himſelf up to unreſtrained paſſions of what nature ſoever, one vicious indulgence leads to another, crimes ſucceed each other, and to veil one, and avoid diſcoveries, we are drawn inſenſibly to the commiſſion of ſuch deteſtable actions as once we moſt abhorred the idea of: for, although my temper was not good, and my paſſions always violent, had not love and jealouſy urged me to deſperation, and deprived me of reaſon, my ſoul would have ſhrunk at the thoughts of murders, which grew at laſt neceſſary for my preſervation."

Here

Here the Count ſtopped, exhauſted and fatigued; indeed he had made ſeveral pauſes in his relation, from weakneſs, and it was very viſible he had not many days to live.

The Counteſs could not reſtrain her tears. "Ah! (ſaid ſhe) I have been the unhappy cauſe of all—" "Do not reproach yourſelf, (cried he, haſtily;) I am now convinced of your innocence; indeed I long believed it, even when I deſigned your death the ſecond time; only innocence could have ſupported you to bear my cruelties, and your horrid confinement with reſignation: I knew too well the terrors of guilt; for let not the unhappy wretch, who forgets his duties towards God and man, who gives himſelf up to the indulgence of his paſſions, and wrongs the innocent, think, if he eſcapes detection, he can be happy: alas! remorſe and ſorrow will one day aſſail him; he will find he cannot hide his crimes from himſelf, and his own conſcience will prove his bittereſt puniſhment."

The Counteſs extremely rejoiced to find him ſo ſenſible of his guilt, ſaid every thing in her power to eaſe and calm his mind.

After he had a little recovered, he turned to the Marquis. "I ſent for you, my Lord, not only to hear my confeſſion, but to direct me in what manner I muſt do my wife juſtice; if it be your pleaſure, I will repeat my ſtory, or at leaſt aſſent to a drawn up confeſſion before witneſſes." "By no means, (anſwered the Marquis;) it will be perfectly ſufficient if one part of the ſtory, nearly what relates to her confinement, ſo as to authenticate her perſon, is related."

After ſome conſultation the Marquis attended the German Miniſter. A paper was drawn up, ſignifying the jealouſy of the Count, without naming any particular object, in conſequence of which he ſhut up his lady in the Caſtle, after her delivery, and gave out a report of her death; that he had brought up her ſon, now an officer, who was lately ac-

quainted with his real birth, and to whom his eſtates were ſecured: that the lady, after many years confinement, had found means to eſcape to her brother and ſiſter, with whom ſhe reſided. The Count having accidentally heard of her reſidence, was come to England, with a view to obtain her pardon and do her juſtice; that he acknowledged her innocence in the ſtrongeſt terms, and deſired, in caſe of his death, ſhe might enjoy every advantage ſettled on her, when married to him, in the fulleſt extent.

This paper was ſigned in preſence of the Ambaſſador, his Chaplain, and all the friends of the Counteſs,—Lord Delby among the reſt.

Not a word was ſaid relative to the Chevalier, Margarite, or Peter: the former had been ſo many years given up, as dead by his relations, though they never gueſſed in what manner he died, that it would have been the height of cruelty to have awakened ſorrow ſo

long dormant, had it even been neceſſary, but as no ſuch occaſion appeared to demand an inveſtigation, every thing relative to him and the other victims was buried in oblivion.

The Count ſurvived nearly a week after their arrival in town, and then expired with more reſignation and compoſure than could have been hoped for. Two days previous to his death he wrote to his ſon a few lines, refering him to the teſtimony he had given the Counteſs, and requeſting he would, by his duty and tenderneſs, atone for the cruelties of his father; bid him remember the awful leſſon placed before him, and reſtrain thoſe paſſions, the indulgence of which had brought ſorrow and ſhame on his guilty parent, whom, nevertheleſs, he had the comfort to tell him was a truly penitent one."

The Marquis, taking upon him to direct every thing for preſerving the body, and having it carried into Germany within a fortnight, a few days after the neceſſary orders were

were completed, told the Counteſs he thought it highly proper ſhe ſhould go in perſon to make her claim. She, who was impatient to ſee and embrace her ſon, received the propoſition with joy. The Marchioneſs, Lord Delby and Mrs. Courtney accepted an invitation to accompany her with pleaſure. The former had written to Matilda the late unexpected and agreeable turn in the affairs of the Counteſs, and again preſſed her return to them. The latter, Mrs. Courtney, ſtill perſevered in her ſoft melancholy, her tender looks, and attentions to the Count, who, when he found the party fixed for Vienna, excuſed himſelf from attending them, but promiſed, if the Marquis and his family did not return to France before Chriſtmas, he would join them early in the ſpring.

This declaration was a thunderbolt to Mrs. Courtney. She ſeized an opportunity of ſpeaking to him alone. "How, my Lord, (cried ſhe) is it poſſible you can think of ſeparating yourſelf from your friends,—will you not

not go to Germany?" "It is not in my power, madam," (anſwered he.) "Say rather not your inclination, (ſaid ſhe, warmly:) you pique yourſelf on ſpeaking truth, you know." "I wiſh to do ſo always, (replied he) but the ladies will not always permit me." "I beg your pardon, Sir, for contradicting you; I, at leaſt, gave you credit for truth and ſincerity, when you unpardonably ſought to gain thoſe affections you have ſince cruelly trifled with." "Such a charge from Mrs. Courtney (ſaid he) has too much ſeverity in it, not to call for a ſerious anſwer; I therefore proteſt, madam, I never ſought—I never wiſhed to gain the affections of any woman but Matilda: my love for her is no ſecret to my friends,—I glory in it. For you, madam, I entertained the higheſt reſpect; I thought it my duty to ſhew you every poſſible attention, a man of politeneſs was bound to offer to an amiable woman; more I never intended—I never could be thought to intend, with a heart avowedly devoted to another." "And do you call this politeneſs? (cried ſhe, highly enraged)

raged) I muſt tell you, Sir, you have (if you pleaſe to call it ſo) trifled too much with my peace, by your gallantry; and was I not completely revenged by the entire indifference of your idol, I ſhould reſent it in a very different manner. There, Sir, (toſſing Matilda's letter to him) there ſee how much you are beloved or regretted by an inſenſible paltry girl." The Count had caught up the letter, and in his eagerneſs to read, ſcarcely heard her laſt words. He devoured every line with his eager eyes; and when he came to the concluſion, " happier with another woman." " O, Matilda! never, never! You may indeed forget me; mine is a common character, but there are few like yours in the world." " Then looking at it again, and turning to Mrs. Courtney, who looked full of fury and malice, " May I be permitted to aſk, madam, on what occaſion you wrote this young lady, and of what nature thoſe offers of ſervice were, made in my name by you." Mrs. Courtney bluſhed, and was in the higheſt confuſion. " Shall I interpret your looks, madam?"

madam?" (aſked he again.) "No, Sir, I can ſpeak their language myſelf. I wrote to know her ſentiments, at the time you were amuſing yourſelf at the expence of my folly, as I had too much honor to give you encouragement, if ſhe had any hopes of you." "So then, (ſaid he, in a rage) ſhe believes I was paying my addreſſes to you, madam." (She ſmiled contemptuouſly.) No wonder ſhe renounces me; if ſuch ideas took poſſeſſion of her mind, ſhe muſt think me the moſt contemptible of men." "And of what ſignification are her thoughts to you? are there not inſuperable difficulties to a connexion with her?" (aſked ſhe.) "Not on my ſide, madam; this hour, this inſtant, I would receive her hand with gratitude and tranſport; her dignity of ſentiment, her true greatneſs of mind are the bars to my happineſs." "Well, but if there are bars——" "I beg pardon for interrupting you, madam; I know what you would ſay; and it is far from my deſign to be rude to any lady, but you muſt permit me to declare, I am reſolved to wait weeks, months,

or years, to have a chance for the removal of thoſe impediments; and if I do not ſucceed at laſt, in all probability I ſhall never marry at all." As he ended this ſpeech he withdrew, with a reſpectful, but reſerved air. "Heavens! (ſaid ſhe, peeviſhly) is this the gallant, polite Frenchman! I ſee 'tis all over; I can make nothing of him, and I will gratify his vanity no longer; on the contrary, treat him with levity and contempt." Pride ſtepped in to her aid, and produced that change of ſentiment which reaſon, honor, and good ſenſe had failed to do: ſo true is the poet's obſervation,

"Pride ſaves men oft, and women too, from falling."

She determined, however, not to accompany her friends; being ſo lately returned from the Continent, ſhe had no inclination to reviſit it, without a powerful inducement, ſuch as ſhe had no chance of.

The

The Count's motives for refuſing were of a ſimilar nature.

The Marchioneſs had heard from Matilda. She declined being of their party, and entreated to remain in the Convent 'till that lady returned to France. She wrote a letter of congratulation to her dear Counteſs, on the great change in her ſituation, but gave, what ſhe thought, very ſatisfactory reaſons for not going into Germany. Lord Delby, however, could not reſiſt his deſire of attending the Counteſs, though ſo recently returned from thence. He entreated the Count to accept his houſe, but he had previouſly accepted a ſimilar offer from the Marquis.

In a few days the party ſeparated: the Marquis, his Lady, the Counteſs, and Lord Delby for Germany: the Count, to avoid attendance on Mrs. Courtney, went to Bath, and that lady ſoon after accompanied a party of friends to Tunbridge.

From

From the time that Mr. Weimar had agreed, before the Ambaſſador, to permit Matilda's reſidence twelve months with the Marquis, her friends had ſent advertiſements to all the different courts in Europe, deſcribing the particular circumſtances attending her birth, without mentioning names. No intelligence arrived, nor enquiries had yet been made on the ſubject, though they ſtill entertained hopes of one day meeting with ſucceſs. As to the young lady herſelf, ſhe had none; reſigned to her misfortunes, her only wiſh was to remain in the convent, free from the perſecutions, and exempt from the temptations, of the world. She heard of her friend's unexpected reſtoration to her family and fortune, with real delight; and no mention being made of the Count or Mrs. Courtney, in the letter ſhe received from the Marchioneſs, ſhe concluded they were either married, or ſoon to be; and though a few ſighs would follow the idea, ſhe ſupported herſelf with fortitude and reſolution.

She

She was one day ſitting in her apartment, and ruminating on paſt events, when the ſuperior of the convent came in, and with a look of regret, "Ah! madam, (ſaid ſhe) I am grieved to be the meſſenger of ill news to you, and ſorrow to the whole community." "Bleſs me! (cried Matilda) what is the matter?" "Alas! my dear child, I have received an order from the king to deliver you to a Mr. Weimar, and another gentleman, waiting to receive you."

The unhappy girl repeated faintly the name of Weimar, and fell back, almoſt ſenſeleſs in her chair. The good mother ran to her aſſiſtance; ſhe ſoon recovered. "Oh! madam, (ſaid ſhe) ſave me, keep me here; I wiſh to be a nun—I will not go into the world again." "Would it were poſſible for me to protect you (anſwered ſhe, ſhrugging her ſhoulders) but we have no power to retain you from the king's order; you muſt go, we dare not keep you."

At

At this moment entered St. Magdalene, all in tears.

"Well, madam, (ſaid Matilda, endeavouring to collect fortitude from deſpair) have the goodneſs to inform the gentlemen I will preſently wait on them. The ſuperior appeared rather unwilling to leave her with her favourite, but however ſhe withdrew.

Her good mother adviſed her inſtantly to write a few lines to the Marquis, and likewiſe to the Counteſs at Vienna. "Give me the firſt letter, (ſaid ſhe) I will endeavour to have it conveyed; take the chance of leaving the other at ſome inn on the road: but make haſte, for we have no time."

Poor Matilda, more dead than alive, ſoon executed her taſk, and the other aſſiſting in packing, ſhe was juſt ready when a meſſenger came to haſten her. With a reſolution that aſtoniſhed her friend, ſhe followed the perſons who came for her Trunks, and went down to take

take leave of the community. Every one was affected, for ſhe was generally beloved; but when ſhe kiſſed the hand of her good mother, both burſt into a flood of tears. "Farewell, my dear, my amiable friend, (ſaid ſhe;) farewell, my good mother: if my wiſhes are gratified, and I have ever any power over my own actions, I will return to reſide with you for ever." "To the protection of heaven I leave you (ſaid mother Magdalene;) perſevere in virtue and goodneſs, truſt in God, and doubt not of being the object of his care; for he is a Father to the fatherleſs, and will never forſake the virtuous."

With ſtreaming eyes Matilda followed her conductor. The portereſs opened the gates; there ſtood Mr. Weimar and his friend. He ſeemed at firſt to ſhrink from her view; but recovering himſelf, advanced and took her hand. "Well, ungrateful run-away, (ſaid he) you are once more in the cuſtody of your true and natural protector." She made no anſwer, nor any reſiſtance; ſhe was placed

in

in the carriage between them. Mr. Weimar was hurt at her ſilence, "You are ſullen, you are ungrateful Matilda." "No, Sir, I am neither: I am grateful for paſt benefits, and if I do not ſpeak, 'tis becauſe my ſincerity or ſentiments cannot be pleaſing." "You are miſtaken (ſaid he;) I wiſh you to ſpeak with ſincerity; to tell me why you forſook the friend of your youth,—the man who offered to make you his by every holy tie, to fly with an acquaintance of a day, and who, after all his profeſſions, at laſt placed you in a convent?" "It was my own voluntary choice, Sir, and very diſtreſſing to my friends, that I perſiſted in chooſing a retirement from the world. To the firſt part of your queſtion 'tis not neceſſary for me to anſwer: you know my motives for quitting your houſe, and for the ſubſequent offer of your hand, if you really were ſincere, I muſt confeſs I think circumſtances more than inclination prompted you to it. How you mean to diſpoſe of me, or by what right you aſſume to yourſelf to be maſter of my deſtiny, I know not; but of this

this you may be aſſured, no force ſhall prevail upon me to act contrary to my own inclinations and judgment; and ſince I am not your niece, you have no legal authority over me."

Weimar looked confounded at her ſpirit, the other ſtared with ſurpriſe; all were mute for ſome time, at length he ſaid, "You have taken up unjuſt prejudices, Matilda; but you will find I am ſtill your beſt friend." "Then (replied ſhe) I ſhall truly rejoice, for it is grievous to me to think ill of any one, much more of him, whom, for many years, I was accuſtomed to think my neareſt relation and protector. If you are ſincere, permit me to write to the Marchioneſs that I am in your care, to diſpel the anxiety ſhe will naturally feel on my account." "We will think of that (ſaid he) when we are ſettled."

This evaſion proved to her, ſhe had not much favour to expect.

She

She was entirely ignorant of the road they took; ſhe knew it was different from the Paris route, and had no opportunity of aſking a ſingle queſtion, much leſs of dropping her letter; as the chaiſe being their own, they ſat in it whilſt they procured horſes at the different poſt-houſes, and at night ſtopt at a miſerable hut, where they got only a few eggs and a little milk; no beds were to be had, and they were obliged to remain four hours in the chaiſe, until they could enter the next town. The diſtreſs of mind, with fatigue and want of reſt, overpowered Matilda; as they were changing horſes, ſhe fainted. Weimar was frightened; he had her taken out of the carriage, laid upon a bed, and every method uſed to reſtore her. It was a long time before ſhe recovered, and then ſhe was ſo weak and exhauſted, that he was at a loſs how to get her on. Some wine and toaſted bread was given to her, and he quitted the room a moment, to order refreſhments into the chaiſe: ſhe ſeized the opportunity; taking the letter and a louiſd'or out of her pocket, "If you

have charity (ſaid ſhe) let that letter be ſent to the poſt." The woman, ſurpriſed, took the letter and money, and going to ſpeak, Matilda heard his footſteps; ſhe put her finger to her lips; the other underſtood, and thruſt both into her boſom. Joy and hope gave her ſpirits, and when he told her ſhe muſt purſue her journey, ſhe aroſe with difficulty, but without ſpeaking, and was rather carried than walked to the chaiſe. When they drove off ſhe recollected ſhe had forgot to aſk the name of the town; ſhe put the queſtion to him. "Faith I have forgot," was his anſwer. She ſaid no more.

The two gentlemen talked of indifferent matters, which afforded her no information; ſhe therefore reſigned herſelf to her own contemplations until they arrived at a ſea-port town.

She was aſtoniſhed when he told her they were to embark on board a veſſel. "Where are you going to carry me to," (ſaid ſhe, trembling.)

trembling.) "To Germany, doubtleſs," (replied he.) "By water?" "Yes, by water: but aſk no queſtions, Matilda; I am once more your uncle during this voyage, to preſerve your character." "And do you think, Sir, (ſaid ſhe, aſſuming courage under a palpitating heart) do you think I will give a ſanction to your falſehoods, and permit myſelf to be made a ſlave of?" "You will find, (anſwered he) you can have no voice to alter my determinations; but I will now make you a fair propoſal, If you will conſent to marry me, I will, in this very town, receive your hand, and without ſcruple then carry you to join your friends: if you refuſe, I will not part with you, but where I propoſe carrying you, ſhall be entire maſter of your deſtiny. The old ſtory is propagated by my ſervant, that you are my niece, and I am ſaving you from a ſhameful marriage with a footman." "Good God! (cried ſhe) is my character thus traduced? And do you ſuppoſe ſuch methods will oblige me to become your wife? No! Sir; I will die firſt." "Very

well, (anſwered he, calmly) you have had your choice—I ſhall purſue mine."

Preſently they were informed the veſſel was ready. She was lifted out of the chaiſe, and notwithſtanding her reſiſtance, and cries for help, ſhe was carried on board and down to the room below.

" You are now ſafe in my poſſeſſion (ſaid he.) I am ſorry you made force neceſſary; but you muſt be convinced 'tis now in vain to contend with me." Matilda ſat ſtupidly gazing at him; but the veſſel beginning to move, ſhe turned very ſick: without any female on board to aſſiſt her, ſhe was compelled to let him place her on the bed; and then requeſting to be alone, he retired, and left her to her own very painful reflections.

All hope of aſſiſtance from the Marquis was now at an end; ſhe knew not the place of her deſtination; ſhe ſaw no probability of eſcaping from Mr. Weimar; yet ſhe felt an un-

unconquerable repugnance to become his wife—a man capable of ſuch duplicity and cruelty; "O, no! (cried ſhe, weeping) ſooner will I plunge into a watery grave than unite myſelf for life to a man I muſt hate and deſpiſe." She continued extremely ſick and ill. They had been two days at ſea, when ſhe was alarmed by an uncommon noiſe over her head; voices very loud, and every thing in much agitation: ſoon after ſhe heard the firing of guns, and Mr. Weimar entered with an air of diſtraction. "I am undone, (cried he) unfortunate girl; you have been my ruin and your own, but I will prevent both." He inſtantly drew a large caſe knife, ſtabbed her and then himſelf. At the ſame inſtant a number of ſtrange men burſt into the cabin, Weimar's friend with them. The Turks, (for they were taken by a Barbary Corſair) highly enraged with the bloody ſcene before them, were about to diſpatch Weimar, who lay on the floor, when Matilda faintly cried, "Spare him, ſpare him." One of them who underſtood French, ſtopped their hands: he ordered

him to be taken care of, and approached Matilda, who, growing faint with loſs of blood, could with difficulty ſay, " My arm." The clothes being ſtript off, it was found the wound was indeed through her arm, which being laid acroſs her breaſt, received the blow which he was in too much confuſion to direct as he intended. The humane Turk ſoon ſtaunched the blood; and having with him neceſſaries for dreſſing wounds, he ſent on board his own ſhip for them, and a perſon who could apply them. He requeſted the lady to make herſelf eaſy, no inſult ſhould be offered to her perſon. Meantime Weimar was carried on board the Turkiſh veſſel, and carefully guarded. His wound was a dangerous one, and the perſon who dreſt it gave but little hopes of his life; it continued however in a fluctuating ſtate 'till their arrival at Tunis.

Matilda was out of all danger, but a prey to the moſt diſmal apprehenſions of what might befall her.

On

On their arrival ſhe was taken on ſhore to the captain's houſe, where a very amiable woman received her with complacency, though they could not underſtand each other. Weimar was likewiſe brought on ſhore; and his ſituation growing more deſperate, he requeſted to know if there was any hopes of his recovery, and being anſwered in the negative, the poor wretch, after many apparent convulſive ſtruggles, aſked if there was any French or German prieſt in the city? and being informed there was none, he requeſted to ſee Matilda, in preſence of the captain and his friend, but that friend had been carried to a country houſe, to work in the gardens; the captain and lady however attended him. When he ſaw her he groaned moſt bitterly, nor could ſhe behold the man to whom ſhe had owed ſo many obligations in her juvenile days, reduced to a ſituation ſo wretched, without being inexpreſſibly ſhocked. He ſaw her emotions, and keenly felt how little he deſerved them. "Matilda, (he cried) I ſhall ſoon be paſt the power of perſecuting you myſelf, but

when I think where and in whoſe hands I leave you, I ſuffer torments worſe than death can inflict." "Let not the ſituation of the lady grieve you, (ſaid the generous Turk;) though I purſue an employment I am weary of, I never injure women; if ſhe has friends, they may recover her." "O, Matilda! (ſaid the dying man) I will not deceive you, your death would to me have been the greateſt comfort; I cannot bear the idea, another ſhould poſſeſs you. Swear to me, (added he, eagerly) that you will become a nun—that you will take the veil." She was terrified by his vehemence; and though ſhe both wiſhed and deſigned it, heſitated. The captain ſaid, "How dare you, ſo near death, compel an oath foreign to her heart; no ſuch vow ſhall paſs in my hearing, be your affinity to her what it may." "No, Mr. Weimar, (anſwered ſhe) I will not ſwear, though it is at preſent my intention ſo to do." "Then I am dumb (ſaid he;) I will not be the victim to procure happineſs for others."

It was in vain Matilda and the Captain urged him to ſpeak, he was reſolutely ſilent. The Turk whiſpered her to withdraw; ſhe obeyed; and in about half an hour was deſired to return. "I am conquered (ſaid Mr. Weimar;) this man, this generous enemy has prevailed. Prepare to hear a ſtory will pierce you to the heart. I am your uncle, but not a German, nor is my name Weimar." "O, tell me, (cried Matilda) have I a father, have I a mother living?" "Not a father (anſwered he, ſighing) perhaps a mother you may have, but I have not heard for many years." She claſped her hands and burſt into tears. "O, tell me—tell me all, for I am prepared to hear a tale of horror." "Horror, indeed! (repeated he) but I will confeſs all. Your father, the Count Berniti—" "My father a Count! (cried ſhe, in an accent of joy.) "Yes; but do not interrupt me. Your father was a Neapolitan nobleman, I was his younger brother; he had every good and amiable quality that could dignify human nature. From my earlieſt re-

membrance, I hated him; his virtue procured him the love of our parents and the eſteem of our friends; I was envious, malicious, crafty and diſſipated. My parents ſaw my early propenſity to wickedneſs, but entirely taken up with their darling boy, I muſt ſay that they neglected to eradicate thoſe ſeeds of vice in my nature, which an early and proper attention might have done; but given up to the care of profligate ſervants, never received but with frowns and ſcorn; my learning, my dreſs, my company, all left to myſelf, and treated in general as a diſgrace to the family: I ſoon grew hardened in wickedneſs, and hated my relations in proportion to their neglect of me. Parents would do well to conſider this leſſon: unjuſt, or even deſerved partialities, viſibly beſtowed on one child, whilſt others are neglected, too generally creates hatred to that child, and a careleſſneſs in performing their duties, which they ſee are little attended to. It lays a foundation for much future miſery in the family; creates every vice which envy and malice can give birth

to,

to, and the darling object is generally the victim. But here I will do my brother juſtice; the only kindneſs I ever received was from him, and often with tears he has ſupplicated favours for me, which was the only ones that ever met with a refuſal, all others he could command. I grew at laſt ſo deſperate that I formed an aſſociation with the moſt abandoned youth of the city, and was univerſally deſpiſed. About this time my father died, leaving his whole fortune to my brother, except a very trifling pittance, weekly, to me. This diſgrace affected me beyond all bounds of patience. My brother ſent for me; with a heart burſting with rage, I went. The moment I appeared, he roſe and embraced me, with tears. "My dear brother, (ſaid he) I have now the power to make your life more comfortable; evil-minded perſons ſet my father againſt you, nor could I ever remove the prejudice: henceforth we are brothers, more than ever; uſe this houſe as your own; give up your idle acquaintance—I will introduce you to the good and worthy, and thoſe only

ſhall be my friends that are my brother's alſo." A reception ſo unexpected for a few moments warmed my heart to virtue, but the impreſſion ſoon wore off; I accepted his offer, nevertheleſs, and for ſome time endeavoured to keep within bounds, and to be as private in my vices as poſſible. I found it eaſy to deceive my brother; whilſt I preſerved a ſemblance of goodneſs before him, no ſuſpicion entered his breaſt. I had ſo long accuſtomed myſelf to behold him with hatred and envy, that every proof of his kindneſs, which carried with it an obligation, I could not ſupport; rendered him more hateful in my eyes, becauſe I knew it was undeſerved. One morning the Count aſked what I thought of the Count Morlini's daughter? (at that time eſteemed the moſt beautiful woman in Naples, and whom I had long looked at with deſiring eyes.) I ſpoke my opinion freely. "I am glad (returned my brother) your ſentiments correſpond with mine; ſhe is good as well as beautiful, and I hope in a ſhort time will become my wife." This was a dagger to my heart:

heart: I knew ſhe never could be mine, and therefore had ſuppreſſed my wiſhes, but the idea of her being my brother's wife threw me into a rage little ſhort of madneſs; I haſtened from him to vent my paſſion alone. Every plan which malice could ſuggeſt, I thought on, to prevent the marriage, but my plots proved abortive, and the union took place. The day previous to the marriage, my noble brother preſented me with a deed, which ſecured a handſome annuity to me for life; aſſuring me his houſe was ſtill my home—his country ſeat the ſame, but he choſe to make me independent. From that day I was truly miſerable: I adored the Counteſs, I hated my brother. She treated me with ſweetneſs and civility, which increaſed my paſſion. In ſhort, I grew ſo fond of her, that I neglected my old aſſociates, and lived almoſt at home for ever. The deluded pair were delighted with my reformation, and behaved with redoubled kindneſs. Here I muſt pauſe (ſaid Mr. Weimar) for I am much fatigued."

Matilda,

Matilda, whoſe eager curioſity could ill ſupport any interruption of the narrative, haſtened to give him a cordial, and ſome drops to recruit his ſpirits.

" Before I proceed any further (ſaid Mr. Weimar) 'tis fit an inſtrument ſhould be drawn and ſigned by me and proper witneſſes, proving that I acknowledge Matilda to be the only child and heireſs to the late Count Berniti's eſtates, which I have unjuſtly withheld; let this be done, leſt the hand of death ſhould cut me off, as I every hour expect."

The generous captain loſt no time in procuring the inſtrument to be drawn and properly atteſted. Matilda withdrew mean time to reflect on what ſhe had already heard, and in trembling expectation of what was to follow. A painful thought obtruded itſelf. " Ah! had I known, (cried ſhe) ſome time ago, that my birth was noble, happineſs might have been my portion—it is now too late!" She was ſoon recalled to the ſick room:

room; and every thing being ſettled as the unhappy repentant Weimar deſired, he lay a ſhort time compoſed and then reſumed his narrative.

" For ſome months I lived in the houſe, a torment to myſelf, and concerting ſchemes to ruin the happineſs of others. The Counteſs advanced in her pregnancy: my brother was overjoyed—I affected to be the ſame. There was at this time a young woman in the city whom I had ſeduced, and who was likewiſe with child; I knew I could bring her to any terms I pleaſed; I laid my plan accordingly: ſhe went to live near my brother's country houſe, and paſſed for a young widow, greatly diſtreſſed. We contrived my ſiſter ſhould hear of her; the conſequence was, as we expected, ſhe was ſent for, and told a plauſible tale; was relieved, and engaged as a nurſe for the Counteſs's child. She was brought to bed three weeks before that lady, of a girl. The Counteſs was delivered of Matilda. Agatha, for it was ſhe, Matilda, whom you well remember, attended her and received the

the child. As ſoon as the Counteſs could be moved with ſafety, we all went to the houſe in the country. It was cloſe to the ſea, and at the back a beautiful wood, where my brother frequently amuſed himſelf by having little viſta's cut. It was in this place I deſigned to execute the horrid plan I had long concerted. I had privately procured a diſguiſe, which lay concealed at one part of the wood. I knew he generally walked in the evening, and proceeded accordingly. Taking a horſe one morning, I pretended to go into the city: I did ſo; and returned about the hour I ſuppoſed my brother in the wood: I faſtened my horſe at the entrance of it, changed my dreſs, put a maſk on my face, and crept on towards the lower part; I diſtinguiſhed him through trees—let me haſten from the remembrance!—I ſuddenly came upon him, and by repeated ſtabs, laid him dead at my feet." Matilda uttered a cry of horror. "I do not wonder at your emotion, (ſaid he) ſince at this moment I tremble at my own crimes!

I rifled

I rifled his pockets of every thing valuable, to make it believed he had been diſpatched by robbers. I returned and dug a hole, at a diſtant part, where my horſe was, hid the clothes, mounted the beaſt, returned to the public road, and came on horſeback to the door; previous to which I had thrown his watch and money into the ſea. I had executed a few little commiſſions for my ſiſter, in the city, and appeared before her in good ſpirits, with the trifles ſhe had ſent for. We waited for my brother's return, at the uſual time, to ſupper; the hour elapſed—ſhe grew alarmed. I made light of her fears for ſome time; at length I joined in her apprehenſions, and calling the two men ſervants, propoſed to ſearch for him. She thankfully accepted the offer. We went to the wood, calling on him aloud, and for ſome time I purſued a contrary path to the one I knew he laid in; at laſt we came to the dreadful ſpot, where we all ſtood aghaſt; I made moſt moving lamentations. We found he had been robbed and murdered. The poor fellows took up the

the body, and we proceeded to the houſe. I bid them go the back way, whilſt I prepared my ſiſter. Villain, and hardened as I was in wickedneſs, I trembled at this taſk, and the agitations of my mind, on entering her room, told the dreadful tale for me. "O, heavens! (cried ſhe, what is become of the Count? He is dead! he is dead!" (ſhe repeated) as I was ſilent to the queſtion. I drew out my handkerchief, and turned from her. She gave two or three heavy groans and fell to the ground."

Poor Matilda again gave way to the moſt lively emotions of grief. Weimar ſeemed much affected, and was ſome moments before he could proceed.

"I will not dwell on a ſcene ſo horrid. An expreſs was ſent into the city, ſearch made for the murderer, but no traces appeared that could lead to a diſcovery. My ſiſter continued very ill for many days, and my brother was univerſally regretted. My melancholy

choly was obſerved by every one, and kindly noticed by the Counteſs, who deſired I would act for her without reſerve: this proof of her confidence gave me great credit, and not one ſuſpicion, I believe, ever glanced on me. It was my firſt intention to have deſtroyed the child, but the deed I had done filled my mind with ſuch horror, I could not imbrue my hands a ſecond time in blood. I was ſome time unreſolved in what manner to act. The Counteſs ſtill kept her bed, in a very languid ſtate. One morning, going to Agatha's room, I found her in tears; her child had died that night, in convulſions; it was in the cradle, and the features much diſtorted. A thought darted inſtantly into my head, to change the children: I propoſed it to Agatha, and promiſed her great rewards; ſhe readily agreed to every thing I propoſed; the dreſſes were changed in a moment, and the children being only ſix weeks old, had been little ſeen. I left the room. Soon after, a ſervant came to the Counteſs's apartment, (where I then was, to pay my morning reſpects,

ſpects, a cuſtom I always obſerved) and requeſted me to ſtep out on buſineſs. "O, Sir! (cried ſhe) we are all undone—the poor nurſe is frantic—the ſweet child, the young Counteſs, is dead! expired an hour ago, in convulſions, whilſt poor Agatha thought it in a ſweet ſleep." I pretended to be moſt exceedingly ſhocked; exclaimed againſt the nurſe, ſent for a phyſician—would have the body examined, I did ſo; I ran to Agatha's apartment, the other end of the houſe, abuſed her for her careleſſneſs; ſhe, who was really grieved for the loſs of her own child, ſhed torrents of tears. The phyſician came; he examined the child; he ſaid, it was really ſudden convulſions had carried it off and no fault in the nurſe, the diſorder being common among infants. This ſatisfied every one; nobody troubled themſelves about Agatha's child. I ſent off to the Count Morlini's, who had left us the day before, intending to return the following one. He came immediately; I detained the phyſician. The Count made very minute enquiries, and was, or appeared

peared to be contented with the phyſician's depoſition. "Alas! my Lord, (cried I) who ſhall break this melancholy accident to the Counteſs? I cannot, I dare not do it. Unhappy lady! (I exclaimed) how great are your ſorrows! my own ſhare in them is loſt, when I conſider your's." The Count ſhook my hand in a friendly manner, but ſpoke not." He went from me to his daughter; I retired to my own apartment. I was now my brother's heir to his title and eſtates; every thing promiſed to give me an undiſputed right; and I enjoyed, by anticipation, the pleaſures which fortune and rank would beſtow." Here Mr. Weimar ſtopt. "I cannot proceed now, I am fatigued and exhauſted." He was quite faint, and they were obliged to give him a reſpite for the preſent, and adminiſter cordials. He promiſed to proceed and finiſh his ſtory in the evening. Matilda withdrew, overwhelmed with grief, horror, and a painful curioſity for the ſubſequents events which might have befallen her unhappy mother. Some time after ſhe was

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in her apartment, the captain came in. "The ſurgeon (ſaid he) has juſt examined Mr. Weimar's wound, and makes a much better report of it than in the morning. This laſt dreſſing has abated the inflammation, and the fever is not ſo violent." "If his repentance is ſincere, heaven grant he may recover," (ſaid ſhe.)

In the evening, at Mr. Weimar's requeſt, Matilda and the captain went to his apartment: he appeared much more eaſy and compoſed. After recollecting himſelf a little, he went on as follows.

"The Count took upon him to acquaint the Counteſs with the loſs of the child; but notwithſtanding all his precautions, it had a dreadful effect upon her. She was for ſome weeks deprived of reaſon, and when recovered, the diſorder turned to a ſettled melancholy nothing could remove. Having ſome relations at Florence, the Count propoſed taking her there to change the ſcene. What had been

ſecured

ſecured to her by marriage, was of courſe hers. From an affected generoſity, I preſented her with the houſe and furniture in the city; and under a pretence I, could no longer ſtay where ſuch melancholy accidents had taken place, and having no relations living, I diſpoſed of my eſtates, and ſaid I ſhould travel into Turky and Egypt, without aſſuming any title. In truth, I was ever in fear ſome unforeſeen events might bring my evil deeds to light: for 'tis the fate of villainy never to be ſecure; and the conſtant apprehenſion of detection embitters every hour of their lives who once plunge into guilt. I had perſuaded Agatha, with the child, to embark on board a French veſſel, bound to Dieppe, and there wait for me; having engaged the captain to take care of her, though I ſecretly wiſhed the waves might ſwallow them up; at the ſame time I had not reſolution to deſtroy them. After the veſſel ſailed, I ſet off from Naples, glad to eſcape from a place I could not behold without ſhuddering. Whether any ſuſpicions where entertained of me, I know

know not; for I kept up no correſpondence there. I travelled into France, and arrived at Dieppe, where I found Agatha and the infant. I had a great inclination to ſettle in Switzerland, and determined to go through the country, and find a habitation. Leaving the woman at Dieppe, I went firſt to Paris, inveſted great part of my property there, in the name of Weimar; and from thence I went through Germany and Switzerland. Between Lauſanne and Lucerne, I heard of an eſtate to be ſold. I ſaw and liked it; the purchaſe was ſoon made, and every thing quickly ſettled. I ſent for Agatha: ſhe came part of the way by water, the reſt, to Lauſanne, by land; there I met her, and conducted her to my houſe. We now reſumed our former intimacy, but ſhe had no more children. I endeavoured, by my care of Matilda, to atone for the crimes I had been guilty of, in deſtroying her father, and robbing her of her fortune—a fortune I was afraid to enjoy, and a rank I dared not aſſume, always apprehenſive my villainy would be diſcovered. I kept but

but little company. Agatha, who was my houſekeeper, and directed every thing, many times I was tempted to deſtroy, but fear preſerved her life. As Matilda grew up, I became paſſionately fond of her; my love increaſed with her years, and I determined to poſſeſs her. Agatha had too much cunning not to perceive my inclination; and having long ceaſed having any particular attachment to me, ſhe blindly fell in with my deſires, and encouraged me to proceed. The converſation you overheard, Matilda, was ſuch as you apprehended; ſhe perſuaded me to ſay I was not your uncle, and the ſtory I told you in Paris, was the one we had fabricated to deceive you. I did not at firſt intend marrying; I had an averſion to that tie, and therefore a different plan was propoſed, which, overhearing, drove you from my houſe. 'Tis needleſs to tell you what enſued on diſcovering you had left me: I reſolved to find you, if poſſible, and traced you to Paris. I thought to have deceived the Marquis; he was too cunning for me: but I obtained knowledge

of your being in England through the means of Mademoiſelle De Fontelle; a ſervant of her's having met the Marchioneſs and you at Calais. I ſtill followed you. You know the conceſſion I made to the Ambaſſador, which I never intended to obſerve, having intelligence the Count De Bouville was your lover. I had every ſtep watched, and no ſooner found you were at a convent then I repaired to Paris, told my own ſtory, and obtained an order for your delivery. I found letters at Paris, from my ſteward, informing me of the death of Agatha, almoſt ſuddenly. This was a moſt agreeable piece of news; there was now no one living that could accuſe me. Blind, infatuated mortals! we forget there is an all-ſeeing eye, that ſooner or later brings us to juſtice, when moſt we think ourſelves ſecure! I went to Breſt, I hired a veſſel to carry me to Venice, determined to reſide there with you. With the order in my pocket, and a perſon who had attended me, more like a confidential friend than a ſervant, I came to Boulogne, and obtained your deli-

very

very to me. The reſt you know. It was my intention to have married you, unleſs you rejected me—in that caſe you muſt take the conſequence. When I ſaw the Turkiſh veſſel I gave all up for loſt; and when they boarded us, expecting you would be ſacrificed to their deſires, and myſelf made a ſlave, I reſolved to prevent both: Providence preſerved you—what I have ſuffered, and the near proſpect of death, determined me to confeſs all my crimes—crimes that have embittered every hour of my life, and which have led me into a thouſand inconſiſtences, from fears and terrors, only created by guilt. Thus it is with the wicked; early plunged into vice, they proceed from one bad action to another; afraid to look back, unable to repent, they go on to fill up the meaſure of their crimes, 'till their beſt concerted ſchemes prove their ruin. Had not the hand of death overtaken me, this confeſſion never would have been made; yet even at this moment I adore Matilda. Pardon me, dear unhappy girl, the evils I have cauſed you; let me die forgiven

by you, and join in ſupplicating that mercy I have ſo little room to hope for, but from Divine goodneſs to the truly penitent."

Matilda aſſured him of her forgiveneſs, and implored heaven's mercy on him. "But tell me, Sir, (ſaid ſhe) did you never hear of my mother?" "Only once, and by accident, eight years ago; ſhe was then at Naples, with her family." "Grant heaven! (ſaid Matilda) ſhe may be there ſtill; O, what happineſs, if I ſhould ever embrace a mother!" Tears ſtopt her utterance; her uncle was affected. "O, Matilda! leave me; I cannot bear your tears, they reproach me too deeply; and I have much to repent of before I leave you for ever."

She quitted the room, oppreſſed with the moſt painful ſenſations: the tragical end of her father, the melancholy ſituation of her mother, the crimes of her uncle, and her own preſent diſtreſſed and forlorn ſtate, altogether gave her unutterable pangs: yet a gleam of joy

joy darted through the gloom that pervaded her fate—ſhe was of noble birth; no unlawful offſpring, no child of poverty: then ſhe thought of the Count—"Ah! (cried ſhe) he is now the huſband of Mrs. Courtney; in all probability I ſhall never ſee him more." A ſigh followed the reflection, which ſhe ſtrove to place on another ſcore.

She was ſoon after joined by the captain. "The ſurgeon came in as you left the room, madam; and notwithſtanding the ſick man's agitation, in telling his ſtory, he ſays, he is undoubtedly better, and he begins to entertain hopes, if no change happens for the worſe." "I am glad to hear it, (replied ſhe) may he live to repent." "Meantime, madam, (ſaid he) if you wiſh to write your friends, I will take care your letters ſhall be conveyed by the quickeſt diſpatch poſſible."

She accepted his generous offer, and retired to write the Marchioneſs and Counteſs what had befallen her; but recollecting that ſhe

could not wiſh to be in France until ſhe had viſited Naples, ſhe left her letters unfiniſhed, to conſult the captain the following morning. She retired to reſt, but the agitations of her mind precluded ſleep: alternate joy and ſorrow, hopes and fears, created ſuch different ideas, that ſhe paſſed the night without cloſing her eyes, and aroſe, at break of day, reſolved to write and addreſs a letter to her grandfather with her ſtory. "If he lives, (ſaid ſhe) he will be overjoyed; if not, if I have no ſuch relation, no dear mother alive, ſome one of the family will doubtleſs write and inform me."

When the captain came to breakfaſt, ſhe imparted her different thoughts to him. She had no way of paying court to his amiable wife, but by kiſſing her hand, whilſt the other preſſed her's to her boſom, with tender affection, her huſband having related the lady's ſtory to her.

The

The Captain, after ſome deliberation, ſaid, "I told you once, madam, the employment I am, or rather was engaged in, by no means ſuited me. I was not originally accuſtomed to this kind of life; my wife's father always was; he perſuaded me to follow it. I ſailed with him three years; we made a good deal of money. He died ſix months ago. This laſt voyage was the firſt I ever made for myſelf. I am diſguſted at the ſervice, and mean to quit it: my wife wiſhes me to do ſo; ſhe is a good woman; we have enough; I do not want a plurality of wives—I am content with her. My mother was an Engliſh woman—I imbibe her ſentiments. I have not diſpoſed of my veſſel; I will take you to Naples, or even to France, if you wiſh it, under neutral colours, which I can procure. This will be better than engaging your friends to come here. I have no enemy but the Ruſſians to fear, and thoſe I can provide againſt." "You are very kind, Sir, (ſaid ſhe;) I really am at a loſs how to proceed, and will conſult Mr. Weimar," (ſhe could

not reconcile herſelf to call him uncle.) She did ſo: he approved of the Captain's advice, but thought ſhe had beſt write her friends of her ſafety and ſituation, alſo of her intention to go to Naples, from whence they might expect to hear her deciſive plan; previous to which the Captain could write to ſome perſons, to know if any of her relations were living. This being agreed upon, as the beſt methods to be taken, Matilda reſigned herſelf to patience 'till anſwers could be obtained, which muſt neceſſarily take up ſome time.

We muſt now return to the Counteſs and her friends, who arrived at Vienna without meeting any accident.

Their firſt ſtep was to deliver the German Miniſter's letters to the Engliſh Ambaſſador; his Excellency having ſent diſpatches to his own court of this extraordinary affair.

The

The Counteſs found but little difficulty in being acknowledged, and put in poſſeſſion of her rights. Her ſtory engroſſed the public attention at Vienna, and ſhe received a thouſand viſits and congratulations from every perſon of diſtinction. Though abundantly gratified by their civilities, ſhe was too anxious to ſee her ſon for her mind to be at eaſe. A meſſenger had been ſent to his quarters, by the Marquis, with leave from the Emperor for his return, and preparing him, by degrees, for the agreeable ſurpriſe of finding ſome near and dear relations. The youth had been appriſed of his father's death, but not having read the Count's letter, was a ſtranger to all the circumſtances relative to it. He made no difficulty of obeying the order, and ſet off for his father's ſeat directly.

One day, when every heart beat high with expectation, a travelling carriage was ſeen driving through the park. "My ſon, my ſon!" (cried the Counteſs, ſtarting up.) The Marquis ran out to meet him. In a

moment a tall elegant youth, about ſixteen, entered the room, with looks of eager expectation. The Counteſs flew towards him, threw her arms round him; attempted to ſpeak, but overpowered by tender emotions, 'till then a ſtranger to her breaſt, ſhe fainted in his arms. The young gentleman, alarmed, and equally agitated, aſſiſted, in ſilence, to convey her to a ſeat; and whilſt the Marchioneſs was buſy in her endeavours to reſtore her ſiſter, he kiſſed her hand eagerly, and cried to the Marquis, "Tell me, Sir, who is this dear lady?" "It is——(ſaid the other, with a little pauſe) ſhe is your mother, Sir." "Mother! (repeated he, dropping on his knees) Great God! have I a mother? my own mother!" "Yes, (replied the Marquis) ſhe is indeed your parent, for very many years believed to be dead."

Young Frederic was now in a ſtate very little better than the Counteſs: ſurpriſe, joy, the ſoft emotions that at once aſſailed him, rendered him ſpeechleſs and immoveable.

It

It was ſome time before they were both ſufficiently recovered to be ſenſible of their felicity. The Counteſs embraced him with tears of expreſſive tenderneſs; he, on his knees, kiſſing her hands with ardour. "My mother! my dear mother!" was all he could utter for a long time. The Marchioneſs at length ſeparated them. "My dear Frederic, (ſaid ſhe) you have other duties to pay, beſides your preſent delightful one—I claim you as my nephew; this gentleman is my huſband, conſequently your uncle." He flew and embraced both. "Gracious heaven! (cried he) what happineſs. A few months ago I ſuppoſed myſelf without family or friends, dependent on the Count's bounty; then I was agreeably ſurpriſed with being acknowledged as his ſon, then ſuddenly ſeparated, and only ten days ſince informed of his death—again I was an orphan, and knew not what claims I could or ought to make; but now this unexpected tide of joy and happineſs—to find a mother! O, the bleſſed ſound! to find a mother, uncle,

aunt, all dear and honoured relations! Great God, I adore thy bounty, make me deſerving of thy favours." He again threw himſelf at the feet of the Counteſs, who had hung with rapture on his words, and now embraced him with the higheſt delight.

After this tumult of pleaſure was a little ſubſided, he eagerly enquired the particulars of her ſtory; which the Marquis repeated, as had been agreed upon, gloſſing over the Count's crimes, as much as poſſibly could be done, to exculpate the Counteſs. No mention was made of the Chevalier's death; but the youth heard ſufficient to comprehend his mother had been cruelly uſed, and his features bore teſtimony of his emotions. "Deareſt madam, (cried he) how great have been your ſufferings! henceforth it ſhall be the ſtudy of my life to make you forget them in your future happineſs."

Lord Delby, who had been rambling in the park, now entered the room. Young

Frederic

Frederic was introduced to him, and the foregoing ſcene ſlightly deſcribed by the Marchioneſs. "I am glad, (ſaid his Lordſhip) I was not preſent; for though I adore ſenſibility, ſuch a meeting would have been too much for me."

Growing more rational together, his relations were delighted with the young officer. "It muſt be confeſſed, (ſaid the Marquis) the Count paid particular attention to Frederic's education." "Yes, my Lord, (anſwered the youth) it would have been my fault, if I had not profited by the inſtructions I received; but I thought my debt of gratitude ſo great for ſuch uncommon kindneſs from a ſtranger, on whom I had no claims, that I ſtrove to exert my ſmall abilities, and by diligence and application, evince my ſenſe of his favours, as the only return in my power." "The deception, as far as related to you, (ſaid the Marchioneſs) proved a happy one; it laid the foundation for virtue, humility and gratitude, which perhaps happier circumſtances

ſtances and legal claims might never have called forth. Thus ſometimes good ſprings out of evil."

The following day, when the happy party was aſſembled, and projecting pleaſurable ſchemes, the Marquis received the letter, which the good Mother Magdalene had found means to ſend off from Matilda. He ſtarted, with an exlamation of ſurpriſe. All were eager to know the contents. "Prepare yourſelves for ſome regret, on account of your young friend," (ſaid he.) "What! Matilda?" (cried both in a breath.) "Yes, I am ſorry to tell you ſhe is again in her uncle's power; he has again claimed her as his niece." He then read the letter, and all were equally grieved at the unfortunate deſtiny of this deſerving young woman.

Frederic, with the warm enthuſiaſm of youth, cried out, "Is there no clue to trace them?—I will myſelf purſue them." "Alas! my ſon, (anſwered the Counteſs) 'tis impoſſible

ſible to ſay where he may have carried her to; but let us hope, as ſhe found means to ſend this letter, ſhe will find an opportunity to write again; at all events, ſhe has a protector, to whoſe care we muſt truſt her, until we can obtain further intelligence."

This letter threw a damp on the general joy.

Her ſtory was repeated to Frederic, whoſe ardour was again raiſed to deliver the unhappy girl from her perſecutor.

The Marquis, who was that day writing to the Count the happy event of their journey, and meeting with his nephew, could not reſiſt throwing in a poſtſcript. "My dear Bouville, added he, we are thrown into the greateſt conſternation, by a letter from Matilda. She is again in the power of that villain, Weimar; who, contrary to his engagements, has procured an order from the king, and carried

ried her off, we know not where. We wait with impatience to hear further."

This letter from the Marquis found the Count De Bouville at Bath; where he vainly ſought amuſement, to remove the anguiſh which preyed upon his mind, ariſing from the impoſſibility of ever calling Matilda his. He viewed the gay females of faſhion, with birth, beauty, and accompliſhments to boaſt of, with perfect indifference. Ah! thought he, where is the modeſt retiring ſweetneſs of Matilda? Where thoſe unaffected charms—thoſe natural graces of her deportment? Never ſhall I meet with a woman that I can admire or love, after knowing that lovely girl, whoſe very virtues preclude my happineſs. He was in one of theſe reveries when the letter from the Marquis was delivered to him. The happineſs of his friends gave him infinite delight; but how changed were his emotions on reading the poſtſcript: his rage exceeded all bounds; he determined to leave Bath inſtantly. "I will hunt the villain through

through the world (cried he;) I will find her, if ſhe is on earth, and no power ſhall ever take her from me again. O, Matilda! too ſcrupulous girl, you have undone us both, and ruined my peace for ever." He called his ſervants, and ordered the neceſſary arrangements for leaving Bath that night. He went out to call on ſome friends he had formed an engagement with, and to whom he thought more than a card was due. Croſſing the parade, he ſaw, coming towards him, Madame Le Brune, Mademoiſelle De Fontelle, and Mrs. Courtney, who had arrived from Tunbridge together the preceding evening. Nothing could have happened more unfortunate than this meeting. His temper irritated before, at the ſight of the two ladies together, both of whom he conſidered as enemies to Matilda, his paſſion increaſed beyond the bounds of politeneſs to reſtrain. "I congratulate you, ladies, on an intimacy, minds like your's naturally create. For you, madam, (turning to Mademoiſelle De Fontelle, who was pale with fear, obſerving his violence) you were never an object of my eſteem, and long ſince of my averſion

averſion and contempt: your diabolical falſehoods have deprived me of happineſs for ever; but vengeance will one day overtake you—I promiſe you it ſhall, (ſaid he, in a voice that made her tremble and unable to go on.) For you, madam, (turning to Mrs. Courtney) I have ſtill ſome reſpect: you have many good qualities; but your malice and diſlike of an unoffending and excellent young woman, is inexcuſable, and very evidently purſued, by attaching yourſelf to one you know all your and her friends deſpiſe; malice only is the cement of your intimacy. Take my advice, madam,—break it off, and entitle yourſelf to the reſpect and eſteem of thoſe who are the friends of yourſelf and Lord Delby."

He was going to leave them, but Mrs. Courtney, ſtruck by his manner and words, ſtill partial to him, cried out, "Stop, my Lord,—tell me how long you remain in Bath?" "This night I leave it, (ſaid he) and a day or two hence I ſhall quit England."

"For

"For heaven's ſake! (cried ſhe) let me ſee you for five minutes, an hour hence;—do not deny me, 'tis the laſt favour I will ever aſk." Seeing he heſitated, "At No. 11, on the South Parade—I will expect you."

She haſtily followed her companions, who had gladly removed a few paces from them, and left the Count irreſolute, whether he ſhould oblige her or not: but recollecting the civilites he had received at her houſe and Lord Delby's, he thought gratitude and honour required his obedience.

He called on his friends, and at the appointed hour attended Mrs. Courtney. When introduced, ſhe was alone, and very melancholy, but roſe to receive him with evident pleaſure. "I thank you for this viſit, (ſaid ſhe) which I ſcarcely dared flatter myſelf with receiving, from your abrupt behaviour to me this morning." "You ſaw me, madam, very much ruffled; and the company I ſaw you in was not calculated to put me in better humour.

humour. You will pardon me, if I behaved any way rudely; but I really have too much reſpect for Mrs. Courtney, to whoſe hoſpitality and kindneſs I am under ſo many obligations, to ſee her in company with a diſſolute woman, whoſe want of chaſtity is perhaps her leaſt crime; ſhe is unprincipled, in every reſpect, with a baſe and malignant heart." "Good God! Count, (cried Mrs. Courtney) I did not know Mademoiſelle De Fontelle, was charged with any other faults than a diſlike to Matilda." "That of itſelf, (replied he) would to me be a ſufficient proof of a bad mind; for only thoſe who diſlike virtue and goodneſs can be enemies to her: but independent of that, Fontelle is a profligate young woman, and by no means a fit companion for a lady of your reſpectability, though, being unknown, ſhe may be received into company. I hope, madam, you will deem this an apology for my abrupt behaviour; and now favour me with your commands." "Commands! (repeated ſhe) dear Count, are you obliged to leave Bath ſo very

very ſoon?" "I am, madam; and I will frankly tell you the cauſe." He repeated the Marquis's letter. "The amiable Matilda ever was, and ever will be dear to me; tho' her ſuperior greatneſs of mind will not permit her to accept my hand, I neither can nor will marry any other woman; nor ſhall ſhe, if I can help it, be ſubject to the power of any man on earth." "But, (ſaid ſhe) without knowledge even of the road they travelled, how can you purſue them?" "It matters not, (anſwered he) I will not reſt till I do obtain information." "This is really a Quixote expedition (ſaid ſhe;) travelling the world through to deliver diſtreſſed damſels." "It may appear ſo, (replied he, gravely) but don't let me think Mrs. Courtney poſſeſſed of ſo little feeling, as to be indifferent about the fate of an amiable girl, who eſteemed and reſpected her. But have you any commands for me, madam,—I am really hurried at preſent?" "Well, Sir, (anſwered ſhe) if you are determined to go, I muſt own I wiſh to preſerve your eſteem, at leaſt, and therefore I promiſe

promiſe you I will profit by your advice, and give up the French ladies." "You will entitle yourſelf to reſpect, madam, by ſo doing. Every French woman is not a Marchioneſs De Melfort, nor, I hope, a Mademoiſelle De Fontelle; but 'tis neceſſary ladies ſhould diſcriminate in their acquaintance." Then riſing and kiſſing her hand, "Accept, madam, my grateful thanks for the favours you have honored me with. If I ever return to England, I ſhall again pay my reſpects to you, if you will permit me; and, if I am ever happily ſettled in France, I ſhall think myſelf highly honoured by a viſit from Mrs. Courtney, and her worthy uncle, Lord Delby." Mrs. Courtney's pride forſook her at this polite addreſs, ſhe burſt into tears, "Adieu, my dear Count; may happineſs attend you, though you leave me a prey to regret and ſorrow." He haſtened from her with ſome emotion. That woman, thought he, has many amiable qualities, but ſhe wants ſteadineſs and reſpect for herſelf: an imbecility of mind makes her reſign herſelf up to her paſſions,

ſions, from the want of reſolution or fortitude to ſubdue them; ſhe has naturally a good and generous heart, but ſhe is eaſily led aſide by others more artful than herſelf. He thought however he had done his duty by warning her againſt Mademoiſelle De Fontelle; and returned to his lodging with ſatisfaction to himſelf.

Every thing being ready, the Count quitted Bath that night; ſlept a few hours on the road, and arrived in town the next day.

He purſued his route to Dover, and from thence to Boulogne. He went to the convent, to gain intelligence; the portereſs very readily anſwered his queſtions, but that afforded him not the leaſt clue to guide his ſearch, as ſhe knew nothing of the road taken. She told him that Matilda had left money to convey Louiſon to Paris, who had been gone upwards of a fortnight.

Although

Although the Count ſcarcely ſuppoſed Weimar would carry her to his own houſe, yet he determined to go there. He wrote the Marquis, and propoſed being at Vienna, ſhould he prove unſucceſsful in Switzerland.

It would be tedious to follow the Count thro' his journey. He made all poſſible enquiries through the different towns, without obtaining any information. He arrived at Mr. Weimar's; they had not heard from him ſince he left England. Diſappointed and mortified, he went from Switzerland to Vienna, and from thence to the villa of the Counteſs. He was received with tranſport. The Counteſs eagerly exclaimed, "She is found, we have a letter—O, ſuch good news!"

The Count had hardly patience to go through the ceremony of introduction, before he begged to know the good news!

The Marchioneſs had two days before received

ceived the letter Matilda had written from Tunis—ſhe gave it him to read.

Matilda had briefly given an account of her voyage and arrival at Tunis, the civilities of the captain, and dangerous ſtate of Mr. Weimar. She mentioned, that ſhe had reaſon to ſuppoſe ſhe was deſcended from a noble family, in Naples; that a ſhort time would relieve her doubts; and, at any rate, ſhe would write again, if not join them, in a very little while.

Lovers, who are ever induſtrious to torment themſelves, would perhaps, like the Count, have conjured up a thouſand fears to diſtract their minds. "Is this all your good news? (cried he) alas! I ſee little to depend upon here; "ſhe has hopes" ſhe belongs to ſome noble family,—a ſcheme of that villain Weimar's, to keep her eaſy 'till he recovers; beſides, what dependence can be placed on a corſair? Ah! if theſe are all your hopes of ſafety, they are ſmall indeed." "Upon my

word, Count, (ſaid the Marchioneſs) you are very cruel, to deſtroy the pleaſing illuſion we entertained of her ſafety; for my own part, I ſee no cauſe to doubt the kindneſs of the Captain, who, 'tis plain, muſt have permitted her to write; and for the other, he can have no power, in his circumſtances, whether ill or well." "I hope, madam, (replied the Count) your conjectures are founded on truth and reaſon,—I ſhall rejoice to find my fears are groundleſs; but, be that as it may, I am determined to go immediately to Tunis." "You are right, my dear Sir, (cried the young Count, Frederic;) could I diſengage my mind from ſuperior duties, I would, with pleaſure, accompany you." "Ah! the knight-errantry of youthful folks! (ſaid the Marquis, ſmiling) but I aſſure you, my good friend, we are all here equally intereſted in the fate of Matilda, and equally deſirous of promoting any plan conducive to her ſafety." "I am ſure of it, (anſwered the Count) and therefore hope you will not take it ill, if I leave

you to-morrow, for I am reſolved to go to Tunis, if a veſſel can be hired."

They ſaw it was in vain to oppoſe his reſolution, and were therefore ſilent.

He was delighted with the warmth of the young Count, and praiſed his ſpirit in the moſt lively terms.

He took leave of them the following morning, to purſue his plan, with the earneſt good wiſhes of the whole family.

Meantime every thing ſucceeded at Tunis, to Matilda's wiſhes. Mr. Weimar daily grew better. At firſt his recovery ſeemed rather a matter of regret to him; but when ſhe aſſured him of her entire forgiveneſs, that ſhe never would betray the ſecret of her father's death, and that the reſtitution of her eſtates would ſufficiently prove his penitence for the intended wrong done to her, he grew more reconciled, and by degrees, her ſenſible

and pious obſervations wrought ſuch a change in him, that he determined, when he got well, the Captain giving him his liberty, he would enter into a monaſtery for the reſt of his days. Matilda encouraged him in the deſign.

The Captain, who was preſent at many of their converſations, ſaid, one night, that his diſlike to the cruel buſineſs he had been engaged in was conſiderably ſtrengthened by Matilda's diſſertations on virtue and vice; he was reſolved never to make another voyage; and, though he could not but think the faith of Mahomet the true faith, yet, for her ſake, he would always reſpect Chriſtians; becauſe the two beſt women he knew, excluſive of his wife, were both Europeans and Chriſtians.

Matilda impatiently expected an anſwer from Naples. The Captain at laſt received one. The good Count Morlini had been dead three years; the Counteſs, his daughter, was alive, though in a languid ſtate of health,

and was gone, with another family to Nice, to ſtay two or three months.

This intelligence was delightful to Matilda: ſhe was anxious to ſet off as ſoon as poſſible.

Mr. Weimar was now well enough to bear the voyage. He made a deed of gift to his niece, of all he poſſeſſed; having greatly improved the original fortune, from a fear of exciting too much notice and enquiry if he had lived otherwiſe; and told her, his intention was to enter into the order of poverty, as the proper retribution for his inordinate deſire of wealth, which had induced him to commit ſuch horrid crimes. She would have perſuaded him to have choſen an order of leſs ſeverity; but nothing could alter his reſolutions.

The Captain having haſtened his preparations, the day was appointed for ſailing.

Matilda could not take leave of the Captain's amiable wife without feeling a very ſincere regret; for, though they did not underſtand each other's language, yet the expreſſion, of the hear was comprehended by both, and engaged mutual eſteem and tenderneſs.

The friend, or rather confidant of Mr. Weimar, was ſent for from the country, his liberty given him, and Matilda, at her uncle's requeſt, promiſed to pay him the ſum agreed upon in France, for his aſſiſtance to carry her off.

They ſet ſail with a proſperous gale, but with hearts very differently agitated.

Much about the ſame time the Count De Bouville had taken leave of his friends; and having hired a veſſel at the firſt ſea-port, he proceeded on his voyage to Tunis, and, without any accident or interruption, ſafely arrived there ſix days after Matilda had left it.

He

He was ſoon on ſhore, procured an interpreter, and haſtened to the Captain's houſe. His heart beat faſt with hope, fear and expectation; but who can deſcribe his emotions when informed of their departure for Nice. He aſked a thouſand queſtions—could ſcarcely be perſuaded but ſome ſiniſter deſign was again practiſed againſt her, and it was with much difficulty he at length grew more reconciled and ſatisfied with the account he received.

He had nothing now to do but to follow her to Nice; but as water and ſome proviſions were wanting for the veſſel, he was obliged to bridle in his impatience, and remain there three or four days, which were ages in his calculation.

Matilda, meantime, ſafely arrived at Nice. Mr. Weimar inſtantly left the place, promiſing to write his niece, under cover to the Marquis De Melfort, ſoon as he was ſettled in a monaſtery.

The Captain conducted Matilda to a hotel, and they conſulted how to act. It muſt be confeſſed her ſituation was a very diſtreſſing one; no female companion, no one to introduce her, ſhe might be ſuppoſed an impoſtor, notwithſtanding the teſtimony of Mr. Weimar, ſigned before the Captain. In ſhort, they found themſelves at a loſs how to proceed. The firſt ſtep was to know if the Counteſs Berniti was there; of this they were ſoon informed, ſhe was, accompanied by the Count and Counteſs Marſilini. After much deliberation the Captain propoſed waiting on the Count, telling him a lady juſt arrived from Tunis, requeſted the favour of ſeeing him, to enquire after ſome very particular friends and relations ſhe had at Naples. This ſcheme was adopted and put into execution. The Count was ſurpriſed at the meſſage, but curioſity carried him immediately to the hotel, and he was introduced to Matilda. He was extremely ſtruck with her figure and appearance. She trembled, and for ſome moments was incapable of ſpeaking; but endeavouring

deavouring to collect fortitude from neceſſity, ſhe thus addreſſed him, " The liberty I have taken in requeſting the honour of ſeeing your Lordſhip here requires many apologies, but I am in a very ſingular and diſtreſſing ſituation. Will your Lordſhip permit me to aſk you how long you have known the Counteſs Berniti?" The Count ſtarted at the queſtion. " Almoſt from a child, madam; we were brought up in an intimacy from our youth." " You knew her unfortunate huſband then, and his brother, (ſaid ſhe) and poſſibly may recollect it was ſuppoſed the infant daughter of the Counteſs died in convulſions?" " Suppoſed! (repeated he) good God! What can you mean, madam?" " To recall to your mind, Sir, thoſe circumſtances, on the developing of which my future happineſs depends. I ſee your ſurpriſe, my Lord, and to elucidate my meaning, I muſt entreat the favour of you to peruſe theſe papers, the confeſſion of a dying man, once brother to the late Count Berniti." The Count took the papers with the moſt eager curioſity.

Matilda, affected with hopes, doubts and fears, could not ſuppreſs her tears: on this important moment her fate ſeemed ſuſpended.

The Count made two or three exclamations, but when he came to the murder of his friend, he ſmote his breaſt, "Unparalleled wickedneſs and ingratitude!" (cried he.) Haſtily proceeding in the narrative, he no ſooner came to the exchange of the children, than throwing his eyes on Matilda, "My heart, and your ſtriking reſemblance to the charming Counteſs, tell me, you are her child."

"I am! I am! (replied Matilda, weeping, and ſtrongly agitated) if ſhe will vouchſafe to own me!" He folded her to his boſom, "Own you! O, what tranſport to recover ſuch a daughter! Compoſe yourſelf, my dear young lady; I am little leſs affected than you are,—but let me finiſh this intereſting confeſſion of a miſerable wretch. He went

went through the whole without any further interruption.

At the concluſion, the Captain related the events at Tunis, and the reſult of their enquiries at Naples, which had brought them to Nice.

" Doubt not, my dear lady, but all your troubles are over: behold the hand of Providence in every event; had not your wretched uncle taken you from France; had you not fallen into the power, perhaps of the only man who would have treated his captives with honor and compaſſion, unknown in general to people of his profeſſion,—forgive me, Sir, the obſervation; (the Captain bowed) had not the dread of death and everlaſting puniſhments terrified the guilty wretch; had not all theſe ſingular events happened, through Divine permiſſion, you might, to this hour, have been ignorant of your birth, and my amiable friend deprived of the joy and tranſport that await her in your arms.

The Count again warmly embraced her. He paid a thouſand polite compliments to the Captain; and though he regretted leaving them, he was anxious to conſult his lady in what manner to convey this delightful intelligence to the Counteſs.

When he returned to his lady ſhe ſaw he was greatly agitated, and knowing the meſſage he had received, was very curious to hear the reſult of his viſit. She fortunately happened to be alone; he therefore related the whole ſtory, read the papers, and ſpoke in raptures of Matilda's perſon, and engaging manners. Nothing could equal the aſtoniſhment of the Lady Marſillini. She anticipated the joy of her friend, yet was at a loſs how to inform her of an event ſo entirely unexpected. They knew it muſt recall to her mind the horrid circumſtances of her huſband's murder, which neither time nor reaſon had ever reconciled her to ſupport with any fortitude. "Yet, (ſaid the Count) to recover ſuch a child; to have a hold, a connexion

nexion in life ſo deſirable and ſo unlooked for, muſt ſurely greatly overbalance the affliction of a painful remembrance, at leaſt weakened, though not ſubdued.

They went to the apartment of the Counteſs. She was at her toilet. Her woman being diſmiſed, "Well Count, (aſked ſhe) have you ſeen the lady from Tunis,—is ſhe a Turkiſh woman?" "No, madam, ſhe was brought up in Germany; ſhe is a charming young creature, and you may be proud of the compliment (added he, ſmiling) when I aſſure you ſhe very ſtrongly reſembles your ladyſhip." "You are very polite, my good friend, (anſwered ſhe, in the ſame tone) but I am neither young nor handſome, and you ſay this lady is both;—but, pray, is ſhe acquainted with any of our friends?" "Yes, but by name only; ſhe has no perſonal knowledge of any one in Naples; ſhe was very particular in her enquiries after you." "Of me! (ſaid the Counteſs, ſurpriſed;) how could ſhe know any thing of me?" "You remember

remember the Chevalier N——, who went abroad ſo many years ſince?" "Ah! (ſaid ſhe, with a ſigh) I do indeed remember him; is he alive,—does this lady belong to him?" "He is not living, (anſwered the Count, for Matilda permitted him to ſuppoſe he was dead, without aſſerting it;) this young lady was in ſome degree related to him, but I think more nearly ſo to your ladyſhip." "Heavens! my dear Count, you ſurpriſe me! I know not of any female relation I can poſſibly have." "She is certainly a near relation, however, (replied the Count) and you muſt prepare yourſelf for a moſt agreeable ſurpriſe, as I am convinced you will love her dearly." "Indeed, my good Count, (exclaimed the Counteſs) you have given me violent emotions; my heart palpitates, and my whole frame trembles; for God's ſake, do not keep me in ſuſpenſe—who can this lady be?" "Before we anſwer you, my dear friend, (ſaid the Count's Lady) let me perſuade you to take a few drops, in water, the agreeable flutter of your ſpirits will require them."

them." "All this preparation terrifies me; I will take any thing, but pray be explicit at once." "Then, my dear lady, bear the joyful recital, I am about to give you with reſolution."

He took up the ſtory, at a French veſſel, captured by the Corſair, and a gentleman on board, attempting to deſtroy himſelf and a lady, deſcribed the ſubſequent events, and then began the narrative. When in his addreſs to Matilda, he ſaid, "The Count Berniti was your father," the Counteſs ſtarted from her chair, "Gracious God! what do I hear; but no,—I can have no intereſt in it." She was ſilent. He proceeded, whilſt ſhe hung her head, drowned in tears at the mention of her huſband, whoſe death he ſlightly paſſed over, 'till he came to the circumſtances of the children. She gave a ſhriek, and throwing her arms around her friend "If this is true, great God! if this is true, I may yet have a child. "O! ſay, (cried ſhe, looking wildly at him) tell me at once, have I child?"

I child?" "You have (ſaid the Count, approaching her) you have a daughter, my dear Counteſs, whom heaven has preſerved to bleſs the remainder of your days." "'Tis too much, too much, (ſaid ſhe, putting her hand to her boſom, and inſtantly fainted in the arms of her friend.) Having drops and water at hand, ſhe was ſoon recovered; and after a few ſighs, that removed the oppreſſion from her heart, ſhe ſaid, "Tell me, if it is the illuſion of my ſenſes only, or if indeed I have a child?" "No, my dear lady, you are not deceived—we have told you truth." "Then, where is ſhe? (cried the Counteſs, eagerly) let me ſee her—I die with impatience!" "Recover your ſpirits (anſwered the Count;) collect your fortitude, and I will immediately fetch her to your arms." "O, haſten! haſten! (cried ſhe, diſſolving in tears) which they were glad to ſee. And the Count, with joy, flew to the hotel, where poor Matilda waited in all the agonies of ſuſpence. "The diſcovery is made, my dear young

young lady; your mother is impatient to receive and bleſs you."

This intelligence, though ſo anxiouſly wiſhed for, gave her inexpreſſible agitations; ſhe got up and ſat down, two or three times, without ſpeaking, or being able to move; and at length, with trembling knees, was conveyed to the carriage, the Captain, at the requeſt of the Count, accompanying them. When arrived at the houſe, and conducted to a room, ſhe had a glaſs of wine to raiſe her ſpirits, whilſt the Count announced her arrival. In a few minutes he returned, and took her hand. The Captain wiſhed not to be preſent at the firſt interview. With a tremor through her whole frame ſhe gave her hand; the door opened; ſhe ſaw a lady, at the top of the room, who appeared to be in tears. Matilda ſaw no more, ſhe ſprung from the Count, threw herſelf on her knees before her, and without uttering one word, ſunk into inſenſibility. The friends haſtened to her relief. The Counteſs ſat ſtupid, gazing wildly on her, without

without moving. When Matilda's ſenſes were a little reſtored ſhe looked up, ſhe exclaimed, "My mother! O, have I a mother?" That word recalled the Counteſs to ſenſe and feeling; ſhe claſped her in her arms, "Bleſſed! bleſſed found! (ſhe cried) my child, my deareſt daughter! heaven be thanked." She dropped on her knees and lifted her hands and eyes to heaven, then again embraced her child, whoſe ſoft and tender emotions were too powerful to admit of ſpeech, nor is it poſſible to deſcribe the tumultuous joy of both for many minutes. The unhappy widow, the childleſs parent, dead to every hope of comfort, to embrace a child, adorned with every grace, to feel thoſe delightful ſenſations to which her breaſt had been a ſtranger, and which mothers only can conceive,—a bleſſing ſo great, ſo unexpected, no language can deſcribe. What then muſt be the feelings of Matilda, after ſuffering ſuch a variety of ſorrows, to find herſelf in the arms of a parent? O, ſweet and undefinable emotions! when reciprocal between a mother

ther and a child! who can ſpeak the rapture of each tender boſom, when parental and filial love unites!

After the firſt tranſports were a little abated, the Captain was introduced. The Counteſs welcomed him as the preſerver of her child. He was ſtruck with the perfect reſemblance between the mother and daughter, and extremely gratified by the affectionate attention of every one preſent.

In the evening Matilda promiſed to relate the parliculars of her whole ſtory, and the following day to write to her friends.

The Count now purſued his voyage to Nice, ſtill doubtful of Matilda's ſafety, and the ſincerity of Mr. Weimar's repentance.

The wind was not favourable to his impatience, and the paſſage was a tedious one; at laſt, however, he was landed at Nice, and, after many enquiries, learnt there was a Turkiſh

iſh veſſel on the point of ſailing. He flew to the ſhip; the Captain was on board; without reſerve the Count acquainted him with his errand, and ſearch after Matilda. "Indeed, Sir, (ſaid the Captain) I pity you; 'tis peculiarly unfortunate, that they have quitted Nice three days, on their way to Vienna."

The poor Count was ſtruck dumb with vexation and diſappointment; the Captain, however, related to him the whole ſtory, as he recollected, in Matilda's narrative, he was mentioned as a particular friend. "When, (added he) the Counteſs was acquainted with the extent of her daughter's obligations to the ladies in Germany, ſhe inſtantly propoſed going to Vienna, which being correſpondent to Matilda's wiſhes, their friends conſented to accompany them, and the happy party ſat off three days ago. Me, (ſaid the Captain) they have rewarded with unbounded generoſity much beyond my wiſhes or deſerts; I ſhall now return, to live in the boſom of my family, and give up the ſea for ever."

The

The Count applauded his reſolution; and taking a ring from his finger, of value, "Wear this, my dear Sir, as a teſtimony of my eſteem for the friend of Matilda, and remember, that in the Count de Bouville you will ever find one, upon any future occaſion."

The Captain could not refuſe ſo polite a compliment, though he was already amply gratified for the ſervices he had done.

Thus we ſee a juſt and generous action ſcarcely ever fails of being properly recompenſed.

The Count had now nothing to do but follow his miſtreſs. He remembered Mrs. Courtney telling him he was going on a Quixote expedition. What would ſhe ſay now, thought he, how exult at my diſappointed knight-errantry? Then, when he thought of the diſcovery of Matilda's birth, "Ah! (ſaid he) ſhould I no longer be dear to her, of what uſe is my purſuit? ſhe will now

now be introduced to the great world, and my pretenſions may be diſtanced by a thouſand pretenders of more merit and ſuperior fortune! Nevertheleſs, I will not give her up until from herſelf I receive my doom." Accordingly the following morning, a little recovered from his fatigue, he ſet off for Vienna.

Meantime the Counteſs, her daughter, the Count and Counteſs Marſallini, with their attendants, were ſafely arrived at Vienna, from whence Matilda wrote to her beloved friends, and earneſtly requeſted the favour of ſeeing them.

'Tis impoſſible to deſcribe the tranſports which her letter occaſioned. They loſt no time in ſetting off, and that very ſame evening their names were announced, Lord Delby and the young Count reſtraining their impatience 'till the following day.

The

The mutual joy, congratulations and expreſſions of obligation which took place on their meeting may be eaſier conceived than deſcribed. The Counteſs Berniti was never weary of pouring forth her acknowledgements to the friends and preſervers of her child, whilſt they, on the other hand, could not help admiring the wonderful chain of events which had gradually led the way to ſuch a happy diſcovery, both for her and the Counteſs of Wolfenbach.

" To-morrow, (ſaid the Marquis) we ſhall beg leave to introduce our friend Lord Delby, and the young Count, my ſiſter's ſon. I aſſure you, (ſaid he, addreſſing Matilda) when we firſt heard of your being forced from the convent, our young Frederic, though only ſixteen years old, had the gallantry to offer himſelf as your champion, to purſue and deliver you." " Can I wonder at his generoſity and heroiſm, my dear Sir, (anſwered ſhe) born of ſuch a mother, and poſſeſſing doubtleſs the virtues of his family? No;

No; I am already prepoſſeſſed in his favor; I know he muſt reſemble my charming Counteſs."

She forebore ſpeaking of Lord Delby, that ſhe might not be obliged to aſk for the Counteſs, his ſiſter, as ſhe concluded the marriage muſt have taken place long ago.

They ſpent a moſt delightful evening together, and engaged to accompany the Counteſs of Wolfenbach to her ſeat, in three days from the preſent; that lady next day ſending orders to prepare for the reception of her noble gueſts.

Matilda longed to ſee young Frederic, and her ideas of him were all confirmed when ſhe beheld him: his elegant form and poliſhed manners, in ſome meaſure, reconciled her to his late father, for having done his ſon ſo much juſtice in his education. Every one was charmed with him; and Lord Delby was re-

received with all the reſpect due to his rank and merit.

As both the Counteſs Berniti and her daughter were ſilent reſpecting the Count, the others were equally cautious not to name him, leſt they might ſay more than Matilda choſe to have known; and there being no opportunities for private converſation, the Marchioneſs earneſtly wiſhed to be in the country, that they might enjoy a few uninterrupted teté-à-tetés.

At the appointed time they all quitted Vienna, and arrived at the Counteſs's villa.

They were juſt ſeated at the dinner table when the Count De Bouville's name was announced. The Marchioneſs gave a cry of joy; the knife and fork dropped from Matilda's hand, and it was with difficulty ſhe kept her ſeat when he entered the room.

The Marquis introduced him to the ſtrangers as his particular friend: as they had never heard his name mentioned, they received him with the politeneſs due to that recommendation only: but when he advanced to Matilda ſhe changed colour, and trembled ſo violently as to attract her mother's obſervation, although ſhe was too attentive juſt then to ſpeak, for the Count's agitations were viſibly greater than her's; he bowed upon her hand and ſaid a few words, but they were not intelligible. The Marquis hurried him through the reſt of the company, and then placed him between Lord Delby and himſelf, ſaying, "Now, if you pleaſe, let us have our dinner; I put a negative to all compliments and queſtions for this hour to come—'tis plain we are all very glad to ſee each other."

In conſequence of this ſeaſonable order the converſation became general, and the Count and Matilda had time to recover themſelves. She wondered indeed no one aſked for his lady,

lady, nor that ſhe appeared to be of the party. He cannot help being a little confuſed, thought ſhe, and did not expect to find me here, I ſuppoſe: well, I muſt try to exert my fortitude, and, amidſt ſo many bleſſings, I ought not to repine that one is withheld from my poſſeſſion. Occupied by theſe reflections, ſhe eat very little, nor attended to the converſation.

The Counteſs, her mother, who had been an attentive obſerver both of the Count and her daughter, ſaid, "My love, Matilda, you eat nothing." She almoſt ſtarted, but replied, "I beg your pardon, madam, I am doing extremely well."

Bouville, who had been at no loſs to diſcover Matilda's mother, as well from the likeneſs as the tender looks of the latter, now paid that lady particular attention.

When the dinner and ſervants were removed, the Marchioneſs complained of a

trifling head-ach, and ſaid ſhe would go for a few minutes into the air. "Will you ſtep out with me, Matilda?" "With pleaſure, my dear madam, (anſwered ſhe, riſing quickly from her chair, and glad to eſcape.)

The two friends walked to the garden. "My dear Matilda, (cried the Marchioneſs) I could rein in my impatience no longer; I was eager to congratulate you on the arrival of the Count, and on your happineſs, in having now all your friends about you." "You are ever good and kind to me, my dear madam. I have indeed met with ſo many great and undeſerved bleſſings, that my heart bounds in gratitude to heaven for its goodneſs towards one who, a ſhort time ſince, thought herſelf the moſt unhappy of her ſex." "You will remember, my dear, (ſaid the Marchioneſs) it was my conſtant leſſon to you, never to deſpair. Providence has now brought you out of all your troubles; a reliance on its juſtice and mercy, and an humble and grateful heart for the bleſſings you enjoy, will

will henceforth make your happineſs permanent. But, my dear Matilda, I can perceive your confidence in your charming mother has not been quite unreſerved; I plainly ſee ſhe is a ſtranger even to the name of the Count De Bouville; how comes that to be the caſe?" "As all poſſibility of any connexion between the Count and myſelf was at an end, I conceived there would be an indelicacy in mentioning his former offers to my mother; yet perhaps I was wrong, and ought to have done juſtice to the ſentiments he then honoured me with, as they proved his generoſity and nobleneſs of mind. If I have been wrong, (ſaid ſhe, with a ſigh) 'tis not too late to repair the fault, though it can be of no conſequence to him now." "Your words aſtoniſh me, (cried the Marchioneſs;) what has the Count De Bouville done to have forfeited your eſteem?" "Nothing, madam, (replied ſhe, confuſed;) he has done nothing to leſſen his merit or virtues in my eſtimation." "I think indeed, (reſumed her friend) you muſt be ſtrangely altered. If it ſhould be ſo, for I

thought you always an enthuſiaſt in gratitude, and ſurely the man who made you an unreſerved offer of his hand, and though rejected, ſtill preſerved his affection through many temptations—who has traverſed lands and ſeas in ſearch of you." "Of me, madam! (exclaimed Matilda, ſurpriſed;) pardon my interruption, but did you ſay the Count had been in ſearch of me?" "Doubtleſs I did, (replied her friend;) can that ſurpriſe you; could you ſuppoſe we did not inform him, you were in the power of Weimar? or that he knowing it, would not range through the world to find you? I am ſorry you do him ſo little juſtice, Matilda, for certainly he is entitled to your warmeſt gratitude, if your heart no longer ſpeaks in his favor." Aſtoniſhment overpowered the ſenſes of Matilda for a moment. "He is not then married to Mrs. Courtney?" (ſaid ſhe, faintly.) "To Mrs. Courtney! good God! no; how came you to entertain ſuch a ridiculous idea?"

Joy,

Joy, tranſport and unexpected relief from the painful thoughts ſhe long had entertained were now too powerful for her feelings: with difficulty ſhe tottered to a ſeat, and leaning her head on her friend's ſhoulder, burſt into a flood of tears, which preſerved her from fainting.

"My dear Matilda, (cried the Marchioneſs) I now clearly comprehend the whole; but, at the ſame time that I give you joy of your doubts being removed, I could beat you for preſuming to wrong my amiable friend by entertaining them; ſee that you excuſe yourſelf well, or depend upon my diſpleaſure."

Matilda, after taking ſome time to recover her ſpirits, mentioned the anonymous letter; alſo, nearly as ſhe could recollect, the contents of Mrs. Courtney's, written to her whilſt ſhe was in the convent; ſhe repeated her anſwer. "After which (added Matilda) your journey taking place, when you kindly

ſent to invite me of your party, the Count was not mentioned; I therefore naturally concluded he was married, and remained with his lady, and that, from conſiderate motives you declined giving me the information." "How induſtrious ſome ſpirits are to torment themſelves, (exclaimed the Marchioneſs) yet I own you had ſome little cauſe for your concluſions; but I am moſt inconceivably ſurpriſed Mrs. Courtney ſhould have taken ſuch a ſtep; that ſhe was very partial to him, I believe, and might wiſh for a return from him, is alſo very probable, but I am convinced the Count never did make, nor ever thought of making the ſmalleſt pretenſions to her favour, any more than common politeneſs required; and ſo, my little credulous, jealous friend, I deſire you will return to the company, make the Count one of your beſt courteſies, and pay him the higheſt attention, otherwiſe I will certainly put him out of the pain that now oppreſſes him, by telling the whole ſtory."

Matilda,

Matilda, who felt her heart uncommonly light, readily promiſed to behave very well, and requeſted the Marchioneſs would take an opportunity to acquaint her mother with the Count's generoſity and affection for her.

This being agreed on, the ladies returned to the deſert, with ſo much ſatisfaction in their countenances as excited the attention of their friends.

" I do not aſk after the head-ach, (ſaid the Marquis, ſmiling) a téte-à-téte ſeems to have driven it away." " You are right, (anſwered his lady, in the ſame tone;) it ſometimes cures both the head and the heart; but come, give us ſome fruit, it muſt be confeſſed you have done pretty well in our abſence.

The Counteſs Berniti was delighted to ſee her daughter look cheerful; and as the Count De Bouville had engaged her in converſation, Matilda joined in it now and then with great complaiſance towards him, which elevated his

ſpirits to the higheſt pitch; and every thing relative to her being full in his mind, he obſerved what an uncommon generous Turk the Captain of the corſair was.

"Why, do you know him, my Lord?" (aſked the Counteſs.)

He was ſtruck mute; Matilda hung her head, evidently confuſed.

"Ah! Count, Count, (ſaid the Marquis) when men get tipſy, whether with wine or joy, out pops all their ſecrets; but I ſee you are dumb—I will anſwer for you. Yes, madam, (added he, addreſſing the Counteſs) I believe the Count does know the Captain, for he has been taken a priſoner too." "Indeed! (cried ſhe) what, at the ſame time my daughter was?" "I will not take upon me to ſay, (anſwered he, ſmiling archly at Matilda) that it was exactly at the ſame time, but I believe it was pretty nearly ſo."

The

The Marchioneſs and her ſiſter could not help laughing at this equivoque, which added to the confuſion of Matilda.

" Come, come, (cried the Counteſs, her friend) none of your pleaſantry, my Lord; the Count ſhall tell his own ſtory to the ladies another time, and I will aſſiſt him where he fails to do himſelf juſtice."

The Count bowed; " You are very good to me, madam; I am only afraid I ſhall have occaſion for troubling you and the Marchioneſs to prove your partiality for me, at the expence of your judgment." " Very well, Count, (ſaid the Marquis) I am thrown out, I ſee. Faith, you are in the right; a young handſome fellow ſeldom fails of engaging the ladies, whilſt no ſuch duſt is thrown in our eyes, to blind our judgment, or obtain a partial teſtimony." " Be quiet, Marquis, (ſaid his ſiſter;) you are really malicious."

The company aroſe ſoon after, and going into the garden, divided into little parties. The Marchioneſs and the two Counteſſes went towards an alcove; the lady of the houſe, with Matilda, the Count, Lord Delby and Frederic took another path; the Marquis and Count Marcellini ſtrolled into a different one.

Matilda now took an opportunity to atone for the omiſſion ſhe had been guilty of, by aſking Lord Delby after Mrs. Courtney and his ſon. Meantime the Marchioneſs explained to the Counteſs the ſentiments of the Count De Bouville; his early affection for Matilda, his repeated offers of marriage, and her noble refuſal openly, grounded on the uncertainty of her birth, ſince ſhe did not deny a preferable eſteem for him. She alſo repeated his long and tedious ſearches after her, as far as ſhe knew of them, and concluded with obſerving, his rank and fortune, elevated as both were, fell far ſhort of his merit and amiable diſpoſition. When ſhe had finiſhed, "I own to you,

you, madam, (ſaid the Counteſs) your relation has broke in upon my favourite plan. I hoped to have carried my daughter to Naples, and to have ſeen her married and ſettled there for life. Ah! (ſaid ſhe) to what purpoſe did I find her, if we are to be ſeparated again?" "But where is the neceſſity for a ſeparation? (ſaid the Counteſs Marcilini) cannot you alternately viſit each other every year?" "No, (replied ſhe;) when ſhe marries there will be many things to prevent it. Indeed, (added ſhe, in tears) good and amiable as the Count is, I wiſh Matilda had never known him." "Poſſibly, madam, (anſwered the Marchioneſs, very gravely) ſhe might then never have ſeen the convent, never have been carried off, and you ſtill ignorant you had ſuch a daughter living, whoſe generous ſelf-denial deſerves ſome praiſe, as the Count's diſintereſted and uncommon paſſion is entitled to ſome conſideration: but I beg your ladyſhip's pardon; I have only done my duty in making this com-

communication; the Lady, Matilda, will doubtleſs conform herſelf to your wiſhes."

The Counteſs, ſtruck with her words and manner of ſpeaking them, caught her hand, and kiſſing it, " Pardon me, deareſt madam, (ſaid ſhe) if I have appeared petulant and ungrateful, my heart is not ſo, but conſider how natural it is for a mother, juſt in poſſeſſion of a treaſure ſo long and painfully regretted as entirely loſt, to be jealous of a ſuperior attachment, and unhappy at the idea of parting from an object ſo entwined about her heart." " It is natural, my dear madam, (anſwered the Marchioneſs) and if I did not hope ſome method might be found out to obviate the objection, I believe the Count would have little chance of ſucceeding with——." " Your and my Matilda, (ſaid the Counteſs, eagerly.) That " Lady Matilda" ſtruck me to the heart." " She is indeed mine, (replied the Marchioneſs) my adopted child; and had the want of fortune only prevented her union with the Count, we offered largely to remove it;

it; but her objections proceeded from an elevation of ſoul, a greatneſs of mind, that would not diſgrace the man ſhe married, whilſt the Count thought ſhe would dignify any rank, and honour any man to whom ſhe gave her hand." "Amiable, good young people! (ſaid the Lady Marcellini.) O! my dear Counteſs they ought not be ſeparated." "Nor ſhall they, (anſwered ſhe) if I find their affection is ſtill mutual: I will have a private converſation with Matilda to-morrow, and you, madam, ſhall immediately know the reſult."

They now walked towards the houſe, and were ſoon joined by the reſt of their party.

Notwithſtanding every one wiſhed to appear pleaſing, the evening was not a gay one. The Counteſs Berniti ſeemed collected within herſelf: Matilda was confuſed and apprehenſive; the Count De Bouville diſtracted with doubts, drew unfavourable omens from the looks of the mother and daughter, and there-

therefore was very ſilent. They ſeparated at an early hour, and ſought in ſleep a forgetfulneſs of care.

The following morning, the Counteſs and Matilda being alone in their dreſſing-room, the former ſaid, "How comes it, my dear child, that, in relating your ſtory to me, you never mentioned the particular obligations you owed to the Count De Bouville, for his generous offers?" "Becauſe, madam, (anſwered Matilda, bluſhing) I thought it would appear to give myſelf a conſequence I did not wiſh to arrogate, for merely doing my duty in declining them. Another reaſon was, I had been miſled into a belief, that the Count had married an Engliſh lady, a ſiſter of Lord Delby's; and therefore ſuppoſing he never could be any thing to me, I judged it of no conſequence, for the preſent, at leaſt, to ſay any thing about him." "You have anſwered with candour and ſincerity (ſaid the Counteſs) and I expect the ſame to the following queſtion: Do you love the Count De Bouville?"

ville?" "If, madam, (replied ſhe, heſitating a little) to prefer him to any other man I ever ſaw; if to confeſs that I think him deſerving of the higheſt eſteem from every one he honours with his acquaintance; if this is to be called love, I muſt anſwer in the affirmative." "You are not quite ſo ready and explicit in this anſwer, (ſaid the Counteſs, with a ſmile) nevertheleſs I believe your ſentiments in his favour are pretty deciſive; and if my conjectures are right, what part am I to act, and how be expected to give a ſanction to your union, which, in all probability will part us for ever." "Never, my dear mother, (anſwered ſhe, in a firm tone) never; no power on earth ſhall part us again: how great ſoever my affection for the Count may be, be aſſured my duty, my love for you will greatly over-balance it; and if the alternative muſt be to part with one, behold me ready to give him up, without the leaſt degree of heſitation." "Now, my dear Matilda, (ſaid the Counteſs, extremely moved by the firmneſs of her voice, and the expreſſion in her eyes)

now

now you have found the way to ſubdue me at once: you ſhall make no ſuch ſacrifices for me, my child; and I will think of ſome method to reconcile your duty and inclination to my wiſhes." Matilda kiſſed her mother's hand with the warmeſt affection, and ſome of their friends coming into the room precluded further converſation. She went in ſearch of the Marchioneſs. She was told that lady was in the garden, and thither ſhe repaired, when, coming to an alcove, ſhe ſaw her ſeated in earneſt converſation with the Count De Bouville. She would have turned back, but the Count ran, caught her hand, and led her to the Marchioneſs. "I am rejoiced to ſee you, (ſaid ſhe) my dear child; do, pray, take this troubleſome young man off my hands, for I declare he has been making down right love to me." "Who, I?" (ſaid the Count.) "Yes, (anſwered ſhe) you know you have—as a proxy; and, as I am quite tired of being only a ſubſtitute, I leave Matilda to ſupply my place for the preſent." She got up and walked

walked away, Matilda being too much confuſed to have the reſolution to prevent her.

The Count ſeized this moment to know his doom. He beſought her attention for a few moments; briefly ran over the affair between Mrs. Courtney and him, as a mere Bagatelle, without wounding the lady's conſequence. His diſtreſs and purſuit of her through France, Switzerland, Germany, from thence to Tunis and back again. He deſcribed the fervency of his love and the tortures of ſuſpence; called upon her in the tendereſt manner, to remember the time when ſhe had ſaid, "If her rank and fortune equalled his, ſhe would, with pleaſure, give him her hand." "And now, madam, (added he) that hour ſo much wiſhed for by you, though of little conſequence, in my eſtimation, when thrown into the ſcale with unequalled merit and dignity of mind; that hour is arrived, deign, my beloved Matilda, to tell me, if I ſtill can boaſt a ſhare in your eſteem; tell me, if I may preſume to hope, that,

that, however changed your ſituation, your heart, faithful to your other friends, has not withdrawn itſelf from him who lives only for you, and depends on you for happineſs or miſery in extreme ?"

Matilda endeavoured to aſſume a compoſure ſhe did not feel, for after the converſation with her mother ſhe thought ſhe was not at liberty to act for herſelf. Being ſilent a few moments ſhe replied, " Believe me, Sir, my heart is ſtill unchanged, ſtill the ſame grateful and affectionate ſentiments predominate in my mind : the Count De Bouville poſſeſſes my eſteem, if poſſible, more than ever, for my obligations to him are increaſed ; but—I have a mother ; no longer miſtreſs of my own deſtiny, ſhe muſt determine for me. I will not ſcruple to confeſs, that it will be to me the happieſt moment of my life, if my duty and affection to her coincide with your wiſhes."

The

The Count, tranſported with joy, kiſſed her hand in expreſſive ſilence, whilſt Matilda roſe from her ſeat and hurried to the houſe, rejoiced that this interview was over. She returned to her mother's apartment. The ladies were with her. The Marchioneſs ſmiled a little maliciouſly at her, but obſerving ſhe looked rather agitated, ſhe aſked, "What is become of the gentlemen this morning? have you ſeen the Marquis and his friends, my love?" "No, madam, (replied ſhe) I ſuppoſe they are rambling in the grounds."

Juſt then the Marquis entered. "Ah! ladies, (ſaid he) I am happy to ſee you together: I have undertaken to bring a cauſe before your tribunal to-day, againſt one of your coterié, and I expect an impartial judgment. What ſay you, ladies, dare you promiſe to be juſt and ſincere?" "Your impertinent queſtion is ſo affronting to us, (replied the Counteſs) that I think we ought to decline hearing your cauſe." "Conſcience, conſcience, my dear ſiſter, (cried he, ſmiling) nevertheleſs, I will open

open my brief. A gentleman of rank, fortune and unqueſtionable merit (here Matilda trembled) has, for ſome time, entertained the warmeſt affection and reſpect for an amiable woman. When firſt he knew and admired her ſhe was in a ſituation that precluded hope, he was therefore condemned to ſilence; that ſituation is changed; he has no obſtacles to combat but the lady's over-ſtrained delicacy: ſhe owns a preferable eſteem, but—ſhe cannot approve of a ſecond marriage." Here all eyes were glanced at the Counteſs, who was confuſed. Matilda began to reſpire. "Tell me, ladies, (reſumed the Marquis, ingenuouſly) ſhould ſo futile an objection preclude her from making a worthy man happy, gratifying her own partiality in his favour, and giving a dear and valuable additional relation to her friends? You ſee I put the caſe ſimply and plainly. Will you, madam, (addreſſing the Counteſs Berniti) have the goodneſs to ſpeak firſt?" "I am not an advocate, Sir, (ſhe anſwered) for ſecond marriages; on the contrary, I think there are but very

very few caſes that can juſtify them. If a woman is left with a family ſhe is anxious to provide for, and has an eligible offer, that will enable her to do ſo, duty to them ſhould make her accept it; gratitude to the generous man, ſhould render her a good and affectionate wife. If a woman has had a bad huſband, who has uſed her ill, and unworthy of her merit, I conceive ſhe owes no reſpect to his memory, but may, without any imputation whatever, reward the affection of a deſerving object, and find her own happineſs in ſo doing." The Counteſs Marcellini, ſaid, "My ſentiments exactly correſpond with my amiable friend's." "And mine, alſo, (cried the Marchioneſs) only I muſt be permitted to add, that if a woman ſo ſituated declines the offer, from over-delicacy, which is no delicacy a tall, and by ſo doing renders a worthy man wretched, and refines away her own happineſs at the ſame time, I think her quite inexcuſable, and deſerving reproach from her friends." "Thank you, my love, (ſaid the Marquis;) and now, ſiſter, your opinion, if you pleaſe."

"Mine,

" Mine, (anſwered ſhe, in ſome confuſion) you are no ſtranger to, otherwiſe whence this appeal? but to convince you I am neither obſtinate nor perverſe, but open to conviction and the advice of my beſt friends, I will frankly ſubſcribe to the opinion and judgment of theſe ladies." " Now, (ſaid the Marquis) you have redeemed my love and eſteem. I will not apply to our ſweet Matilda here; ſhe is unqualified, at preſent to judge; and I fear her trial is not far off from an accuſation ſomething ſimilar, though not on account of a ſecond marriage; however I ſhall now rejoice my client with intelligence, that he has gained his cauſe." He bowed with a ſmiling air, and left the room.

" My dear ſiſter, (ſaid the Marchioneſs) accept my congratulations: Lord Delby is a moſt worthy nobleman, and offers to reſide in whatever country you pleaſe; wherever you are will be his home."

The

The ladies all congratulated the Counteſs.

" I own, (ſaid ſhe) I have a very preferable regard for Lord Delby, and am, in all probability, indebted to him for my life and preſent happineſs: it ſhall henceforth be my ſtudy to return thoſe obligations."

This matter being ſettled, the ladies retired to dreſs; and, after a little heſitation in her voice, Matilda informed her mother of the preceding converſation, between herſelf and the Count. " I have referred him to you, madam, and I beg previouſly to obſerve, I will implicitly, and without a murmur, abide by your deciſion. I never will be ſeparated from you; and if my union with the Count muſt be attended with ſo great a ſacrifice, no conſideration whatever ſhall induce me to marry him. I have already ſhewn I can reſign him, when I think it my duty to do ſo." " You are an extraordinary good girl, (anſwered the Counteſs) but I will make no promiſes;

miſes; when I have heard the Count, I ſhall be the better able to determine what I ought to do."

This day a cheerfulneſs pervaded through the whole party. Young Frederic, extremely attached to Lord Delby, was delighted with the proſpect of a nearer connexion. He was charmed with the Count De Bouville; but his young heart felt a little degree of envy when he conſidered him as the favoured lover of Matilda, whom he admired ſo exceedingly, that his extreme youth only prevented him from being a formidable rival.

In the evening, when they took their uſual walk, the Count requeſted the honour of a quarter of an hour's converſation with the Counteſs Berniti, and they retired to an alcove.

Matilda, who was leaning on the Lady Marcellini's arm, trembled ſo exceedingly, that

that ſhe preſſed her hand, and ſaid, " Fear nothing, my good girl, and hope every thing." This a little re-aſſured her, and they purſued their walk.

The Marquis ſuddenly joined them, and obſerving her companion engaged in chat, drew her gently aſide, " There is a letter for you, under my cover, and I ſuſpect, from Weimar." They walked aſide, and Matilda, haſtily opening it, found it was really from him. He had entered among the Carthuſians, at Paris. He pathetically laments all his paſt crimes, and acknowledges the juſtice and mercy of God: calls upon her to forgive and pray for him; cautions her againſt the allurements of the world, and takes an everlaſting leave of her; meaning, from the hour he receives one line from her, to inform him, that ſhe has recovered a mother, and is happy in her preſent proſpects, to ſhut up his correſpondence and connexion with the world for ever."

This letter affected Matilda greatly; ſhe remembered the care he had taken of her youth, though ſhe ſhuddered when ſhe conſidered him as the murderer of her father. "Unhappy man, (cried ſhe) may God afford him penitence and peace in this life, and endleſs happineſs in the world to come!" She promiſed the Marquis to write an anſwer the following morning, and he undertook to encloſe it.

She joined her friends; but the letter had given ſo melancholy a turn to her thoughts, that every one took notice of her dejection; and judging it to ariſe from another cauſe, every one was anxious to diſpel it, and raiſe her ſpirits.

At ſupper they all met. Matilda glanced her eyes once towards the Count, and obſerved joy ſeemed to animate his whole frame; from thence ſhe derived hope, that he was not very diſpleaſing to her mother.

When

When they retired for the night, the Counteſs was ſilent; Matilda of courſe aſked no queſtions.

The next morning the Counteſs held a long converſation with her two Neapolitan friends; at the concluſion of which, the Count and her daughter was ſent for. They attended, both viſibly agitated. After they were ſeated, the Counteſs addreſſed herſelf to her child: "My dear Matilda, the Count has done you the honour to expreſs a very warm attachment to you, and has requeſted me to authorize his addreſſes, without which permiſſion you have refuſed to liſten to him. I expect you anſwer me with ſincerity; will my conſent, my ſanction to his addreſſes meet your wiſhes? or, can you renounce him, and follow me to Naples, if I deſire it?" "Certainly I will, madam, there, or any where you command; at the ſame time, I ſhould make a very poor return for the obligations I owe the Count De Bouville, if I heſitated to own, that had his addreſſes been favoured with the

approbation of my mother, I could have preferred him to all men living; but no preference whatever ſhall militate againſt the ſuperior obligations I am under to a parent." "Come to my arms, my dear children, (cried the Counteſs, extending them) I know not which is moſt dear to me."

They threw themſelves at her feet: ſhe bleſſed them with tears of joy and joined their hands. Both were ſpeechleſs, but language was not neceſſary to prove their mutual tranſpots. She raiſed them, and preſented them to her friends, "Love my children, (ſaid ſhe) I think they deſerve it."

When a little recovered from their joy, and ſeated by her, "Now liſten to me, (ſaid the Counteſs;) I will not repeat the converſation I had with the Count laſt evening, 'tis ſufficient to ſay his offers were beyond my hopes or expectations: he frankly of himſelf requeſted my daughter and ſelf ſhould never be ſeparated, for he would ſettle in Naples.

That

That intention of his did away the only objection I could make. I conſented to his wiſhes, but reſerved to myſelf the pleaſure of telling Matilda ſo. Laſt night, when I came to reflect on the ſacrifice the Count was about to make, of his country, his friends, the injury his fortune muſt ſuſtain, and the uncommon affection he manifeſted for my daughter, in paying me ſo great a compliment, I felt myſelf little in my own eyes for my acceptance of his generous offer. Diſſatisfied and uneaſy, I ſaid nothing to you, my love, of our converſation. This morning I conſulted my friends; they were equally ſtruck with myſelf at the Count's attention to my happineſs; their opinion coincided with my own—that it became my character not to accept ſuch a reſignation." "My dear mother!" (exclaimed Matilda.) "Patience, my love; thoſe generous friends, I preſume to flatter myſelf, decided againſt their own inclinations. In one word, they approved that I ſhould renounce Naples; that your country, (turning to the Count) ſhould be my country; and

that the ſatisfaction of entertaining the friends of my youth, who offer to pay me a triennial viſit, ſhould be the only favour I ought to aſk, or you conſiſtenly can grant. Yes, my dear children, (added ſhe) I will accompany you to France, and end my days under your roof."

Never was delight equal to what the Count felt at this unexpected turn in his favour; for it could not be ſuppoſed he could renounce his country and friends without a pang; on the contrary, only his ſuperior love for Matilda, and reſpect for the feelings of her mother, could have induced him to offer ſo great a ſacrifice. He thanked her, in tranſports of joy. He embraced the Count and Counteſs. "Complete your goodneſs, (cried he) and add to my obligations, by making this your firſt viſit,—go with us to France, and let there be no drawback on my happineſs.

The Counteſs and Matilda, urging the ſame

ſame requeſt, they conſented to ſpend three months with them.

" Now, young folks, (ſaid the Counteſs, ſmiling) you may take a walk and congratulate each other, conſcious that you deſerve the happineſs that awaits you, from nobleneſs of mind, and a generous ſelf-denial, which prefered the ſatisfaction of others to your own gratification.

The Count availed himſelf of this permiſſion, and led Matilda to the garden, whilſt the delighted mother ſent for the reſt of the family and repeated the preceding ſcene.

Pleaſure ſhone on every face—all were equally happy; and even Frederic, with a repreſſed ſigh, ſaid, " They were deſerving of each other."

Within a week from that day the Counteſs of Wolfenbach gave her hand to Lord Delby at Vienna, after a mutual agreement, that

they ſhould divide their time equally between Germany and England, with ſometimes a viſit to their friends in Paris, which was promiſed, on all ſides, ſhould be reciprocal.

The Count De Bouville wrote to his ſiſter, Madame De Clermont, who was returned to Paris, with reſtored health, on the happy turn of his affairs, and requeſted ſhe would make every magnificent preparation for the reception of his gueſts, the Count and Counteſs Marcellini; the Counteſs Berniti and Matilda accompanying the Marchioneſs until proper arrangements ſhould take place for their marriage, which all were deſirous ſhould be publicly performed at Paris, to confute the odium Mademoiſelle De Fontelle had thrown upon Matilda's character.

Lord Delby and his lady had written to Mrs. Courtney, of the different events which had taken place, and requeſted a viſit from her to Germany; the Marchioneſs and Matilda

tilda wrote, alſo, and entreated the ſame favour.

Theſe letters a little diſcompoſed her at firſt; but as ſhe had given up all hopes of the Count, and was not of a diſpoſition to fret herſelf long on any ſubject, being naturally of an eaſy temper, ſhe anſwered their letters with perfect good-humour, congratulated them on the happineſs before them, and promiſed to viſit all parties the following ſpring.

The parting of the friends from the Counteſs and Lord Delby was very painful: they were ſtrongly entreated to accompany them, but Frederic having only another month's leave of abſence, to remain with his mother, the time was too ſhort to admit of his going to Paris, and the Counteſs could not be perſuaded to leave him; they were therefore obliged to be contented with the aſſurance of an early viſit to the Count De Bouville, in the Spring, when they would come to meet Mrs. Courtney.

The

The Paris travellers, though much affectad by taking leave, as they proceeded on their journey, recovered their ſpirits, and arrived without meeting any accident at Paris.

Madame De Clermont, her huſband, Madame De Nancy, and Mademoiſelle De Bancre waited to receive them. Great was the joy of all parties: a thouſand embraces and felicitations paſſed between the Count's ſiſter, Mademoiſelle De Bancre and Matilda; and when the latter called to her remembrance the difference of her feelings now, and when before ſhe had felt herſelf humbled by their careſſes, as paſſing upon them in a falſe light, ſhe bent herſelf, with a grateful adoration, to the Divine Being, who had protected her, and by ſuch unforeſeen, and apparently, untoward accidents, brought her to ſuch unexpected happineſs.

The Count Marcellini waited on the Neapolitan Miniſter, who came and payed his compliments to the ladies, congratulating the Counteſs

Counteſs on the recovery of ſuch a daughter, and requeſting he might have the honor of introducing them at court.

Three days after the Marchioneſs gave a ſuperb entertainment: all the foreign miniſters were invited, an extenſive circle of friends, and among the reſt, Madame Le Brun and her niece, who were juſt returned from England. Conſcious as they were of their ill conduct, they had not the reſolution to refuſe being preſent at an entertainment where all the great world was invited, and appeared with much effrontery. When they entered, the Marchioneſs led them to the Counteſs Berniti, "The Counteſs Berniti, ladies, mother to the Lady Matilda, whom you had the honour of ſeeing with me a few months ago, as my relation." They bowed, paid their compliments, in a confuſed manner, and hurried on; but the Marchioneſs had not done with them; ſhe obſerved the Imperial and Neapolitan Ambaſſadors were converſing with Matilda; they rather ſhrunk back; "Nay,

" Nay, ladies, (ſaid ſhe) you muſt pay your reſpects to the queen of the day." Mademoiſelle felt extremely confuſed, yet reſolved to put a good face on the matter; ſhe aſſumed a gay and affectionate air as ſhe advanced. The Marchioneſs having introduced Madame Le Brun, " And now, (ſaid ſhe, to Fontelle) let me preſent you to Lady Matilda Berniti, one of the firſt families in Naples, as his Excellency can bear witneſs; and to your Ladyſhip I beg leave to ſay, this is Mademoiſelle De Fontelle, the envious traducer of your character; the deſpicable young woman, who, incapable of practiſing virtue, from the depravity of her own mind, naturally hates the good and exalted characters of thoſe who entitle themſelves to the reſpect and admiration of the world, and who now meets with that contempt and mortification worthleſs and cenſorious characters like her's deſerve."

The ſtruggles of Fontelle, to free her hand from the Marchioneſs, and the elevated voice

voice of that lady, had drawn a large circle round her. "Go, Mademoiſelle, (added ſhe) leave the preſence of thoſe you can never ſee without ſelf-accuſation; and may your example teach others how cautious they ought to be in judging of perſons and appearances from the malignancy of their own hearts. Candour and good nature (ſaid ſhe, ſmiling) will give beauty to the moſt indifferent faces, whilſt envy and malice will render the moſt beautiful perſons truly contemptible."

Matilda, who had not expected this denouement, was extremely confuſed, and felt for the mortified Fontelle, but the numbers who crowded round her, and expreſſed their ſatisfaction, though it in ſome degree abated her regret, induced her to think there was little dependence on the applauſes of the multitude: theſe very people, thought ſhe, a few months ago encouraged the perſons they now reprobate; let me not be vain of reſpect which only circumſtances create!

Matilda

Matilda thought juſtly; ſince every day's experience muſt convince her, fortuitous circumſtances will engage the ſhew of eſteem and reſpect, which the next moment of misfortune will as aſſuredly deprive us of, among thoſe who are not capable of diſcriminating, and attach themſelves only to perſons gifted by fortune, and are incapable of giving merit, if in obſcurity, the praiſe it deſerves.

The two ladies having left the room, boiling with rage and indignation, and leaving a uſeful leſſon to the envious and ill-natured, harmony was reſtored; every one exerted themſelves for the entertainment of others, and every one agreed it was the moſt delightful evening they had ever ſpent; though many of them called on Mademoiſelle De Fontelle the following morning, expreſſed their ſorrow for the ill treatment ſhe ſuffered, and aſſured her it was the moſt horrid entertainment; the Lady Matilda, the idol of the evening, the moſt vain, impertinent, conceited creature they had ever ſeen.

Such

Such is the progreſs of envy, ſuch the hatred of virtue, in bad minds, and ſuch you meet with in all public circles.

In leſs than a fortnight after their arrival in Paris, the Count De Bouville, who had been indefatigable in his endeavours to haſten all the elegant arrangements he had projected for the reception of his bride, had the pleaſure of ſeeing every thing in proper order, and by the approbation of all their joint relations and friends, received the hand and heart of his Matilda, who all acknowledged was the only one deſerving the entire affection of the accompliſhed and reſpectable Count De Bouville.

Thus, after a variety of ſtrange and melancholy incidents, Matilda received the reward of her ſteadineſs, fortitude, and virtuous ſelf-denial. A conſciouſneſs of performing her ſeveral duties enſured her happineſs; and when ſhe wrote her beloved Mother St. Magdalene the happy concluſion of her adventures,

ventures, "From you, (ſaid ſhe) I learned reſignation, and a dependence on that Being who never forſakes the virtuous; from you I learned never to deſpair; to your precepts and prevention I am indebted for not taking the veil; and I truſt, called into an elevated ſituation, I ſhall ever remember the unfortunate have claims upon the hearts of thoſe whom God has bleſſed with affluence; and that, through your means, reſerved to experience every bleſſing of life, I ſhall feel it my duty, by active virtues, to extend, to the utmoſt of my abilities, thoſe bleſſings to others leſs fortunate than myſelf."

FINIS.